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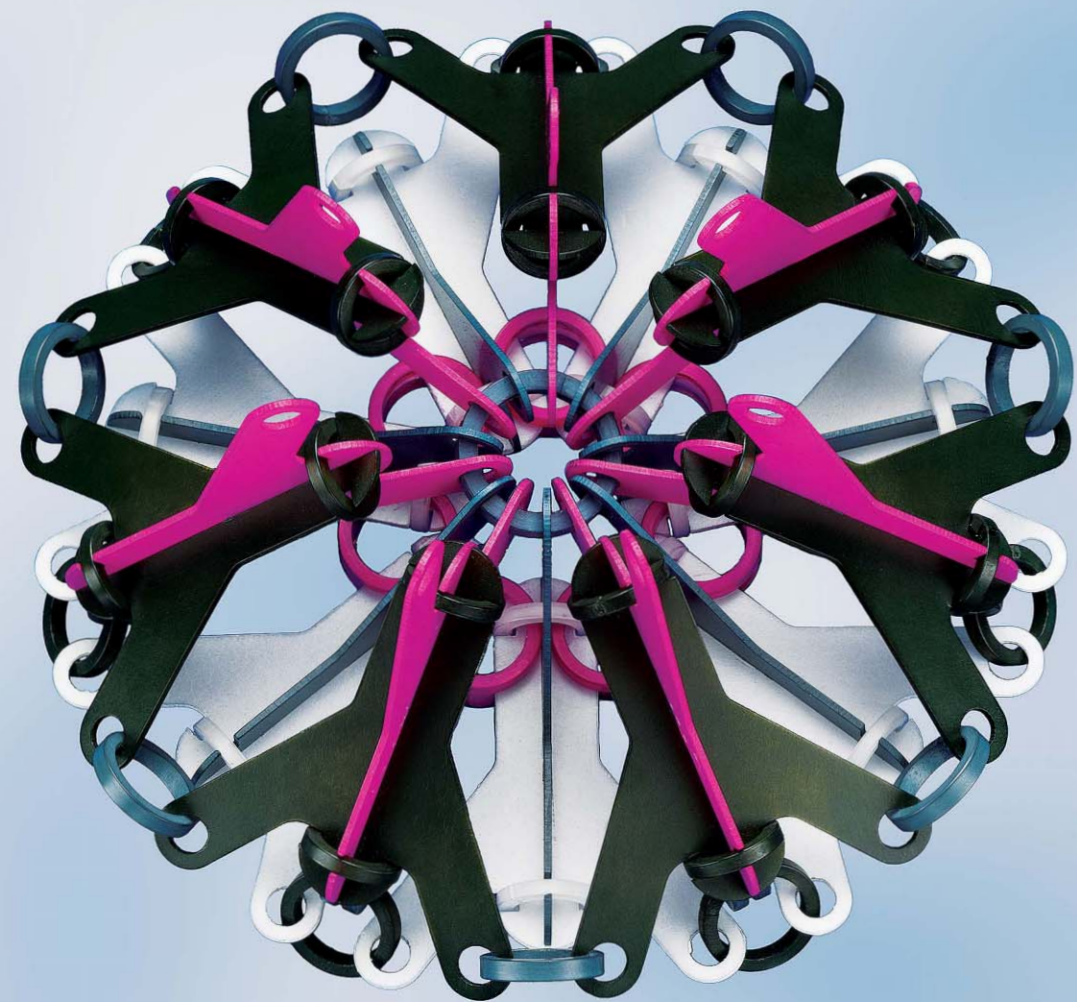

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CONTENTS VOL.31/NO.3

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
Rosh Hashanah (Torah pointer) (detail), 2010
sterling silver, 18k gold, citrine, honeycomb, bee, glass
6 ½ x ⅝ x ⅝"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE
(see Feature, page 42)

4 **Foreword**

IN PRODUCTION

12 **Sarah Graham**
ANDREA DINOTO

14 **Deb Karash**
ANDREA DINOTO

IN THE STUDIO

16 **Andy Cooperman**
JUDITH WAGONFELD

VIEW

18 **Steampunk**
KAREN CHRISTIANS

LOOK

20 **Charles Lewton-Brain**

FEATURES

24 **Svenja John: Jewelry Auteur**
The plastic jewelry of Svenja John is radiant with a mastery of color, light, and structure.
MARJORIE SIMON

34 **Graphic Content: Counterculture Imagery in Contemporary Jewelry**
In their commitment to controversial content, jewelers are enlisting bold graphic imagery.
GABRIEL CRAIG

42 **Post-Ethnic: Judaica Today**
Contemporary Judaica blends tradition, wit, and metaphor to enhance and question ritual.
DANIEL BELASCO

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

52 **Barbara Mann: Form and Response**
DOROTHY JOINER

53 **Susan Myers: Sleight of Hand**
CHRISTINE TATE

53 **Betinna Speckner: A Rose is a Rose is a Rose**
ANDREA DINOTO

54 **Think Again: New Latin American Jewelry**
BARBARA SMITH

56 **Society News**
DANA SINGER

Cover: SVENJA JOHN
Petaluma, 2010
polycarbonate
diameter 4 ⅛"
COURTESY MARI SHAW
PHOTO AND BACKGROUND DESIGN: JOHN BIGELOW TAYLOR
(see Feature, page 24)

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FOREWORD

2011 HAS ALREADY witnessed a historic share of political strife, earning it the label of the "Year of Revolutions." In Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Albania, and even Wisconsin people have taken to streets and squares, demanding change. Revolution is in the air, and it seems to be contagious.

Meanwhile, on the metalsmithing front, there are also political stirrings, albeit less violent. It is therefore timely that this issue of *Metalsmith* harbors a number of works that bristle with dissent and social critique.

Charles Lewton-Brain, who selected the works for our "Look" department, has an avowed appetite for jewelry that offers "a wearable statement of belief, critique, and activism." While he has gathered keen examples of polemical jewelry, he reports having had difficulty finding them. "I have a suspicion that perhaps, like erotic jewelry, political jewelry is made and shared, but does not necessarily get exhibited or published much," he says. "At least that is what I hope."

As if to answer Lewton-Brain's call, our "Graphic Content" feature showcases five contemporary jewelers who enlist "graphic forms in the service of cultural commentary and even counterculture proclamations." Author and craft-activist Gabriel Craig examines the way that artists address issues such as war, race, and stereotyping through compelling mergers of metalwork and graphic imagery. Craig also notes a dearth of jewelry that "speaks of the moment, of politics, of identity, of difference, and of gender," or that simply "speaks at all."

While pointedly political jewelry may be rare, often if one scratches the surface one can detect a social intent, like the plea for stem cell research in the richly wrought forms of Barbara Mann, reviewed here. By virtue of being worn on the body, jewelry carries an implicit ethical charge. Highly personal, jewelry is also very public, allowing ideas to adorn one's sleeve, one's neck, or one's middle finger.…

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

metalsmith

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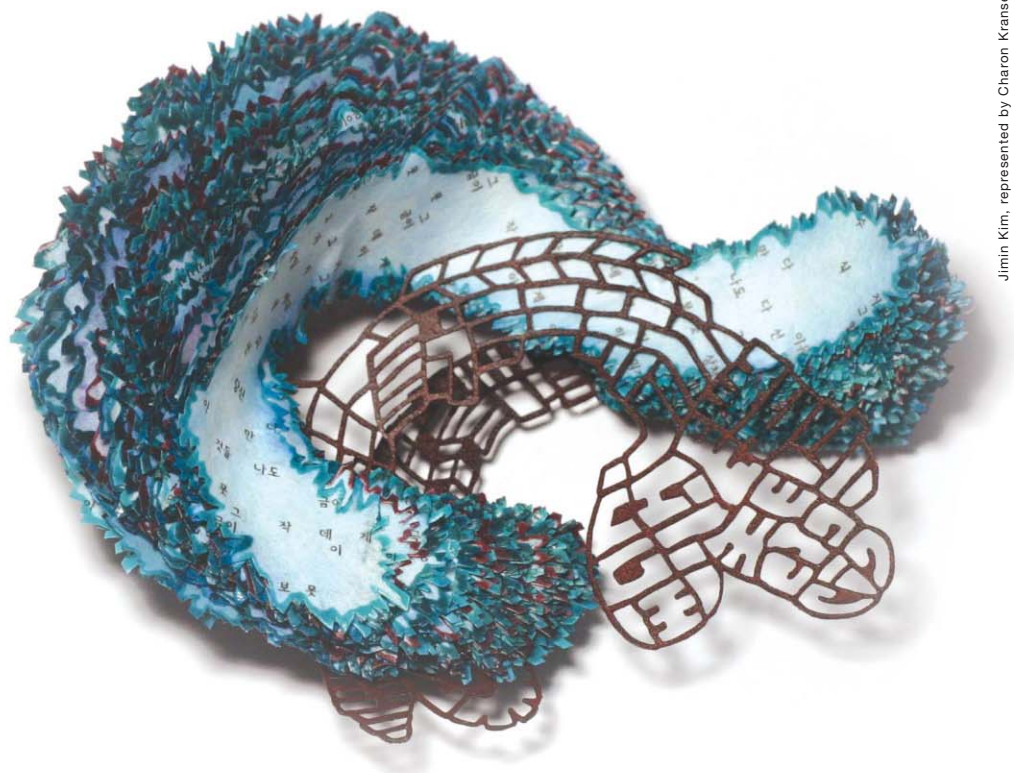

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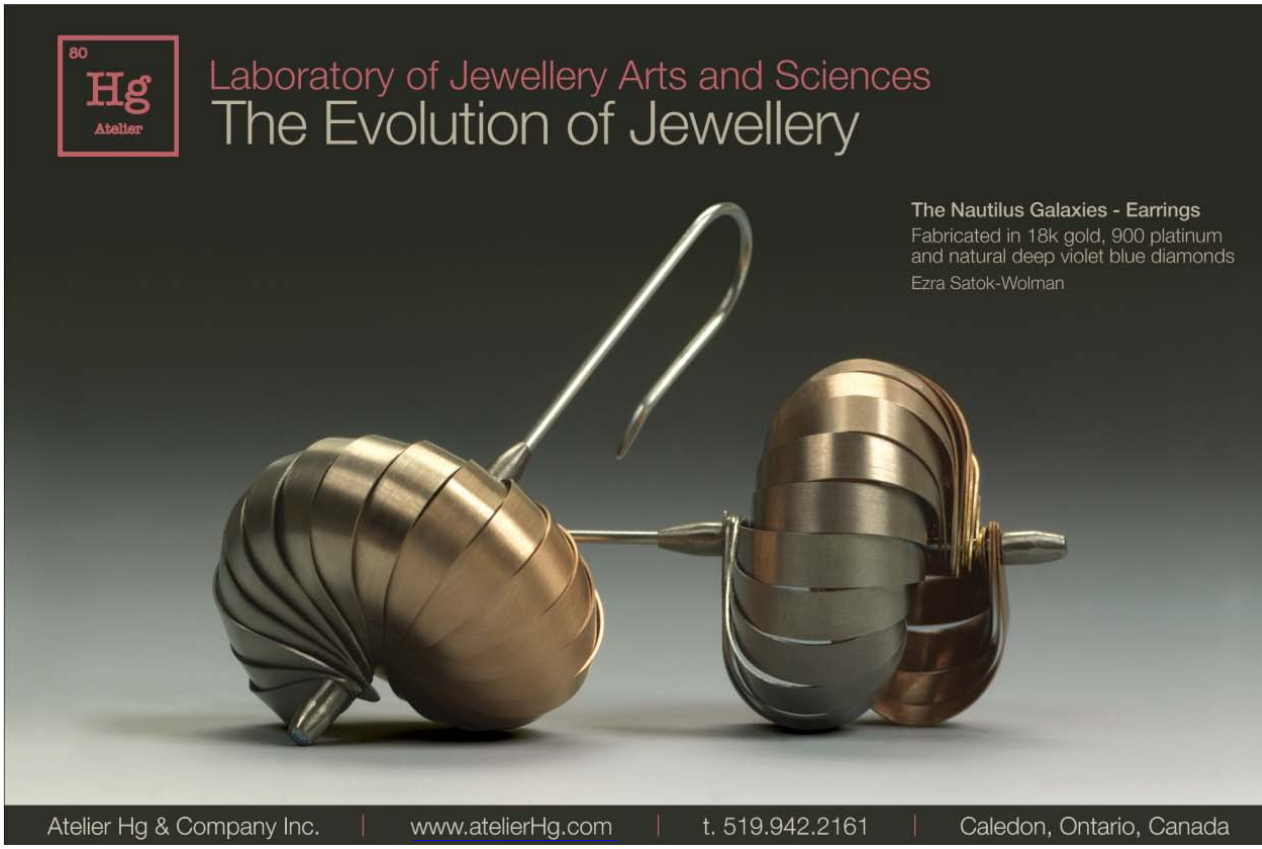
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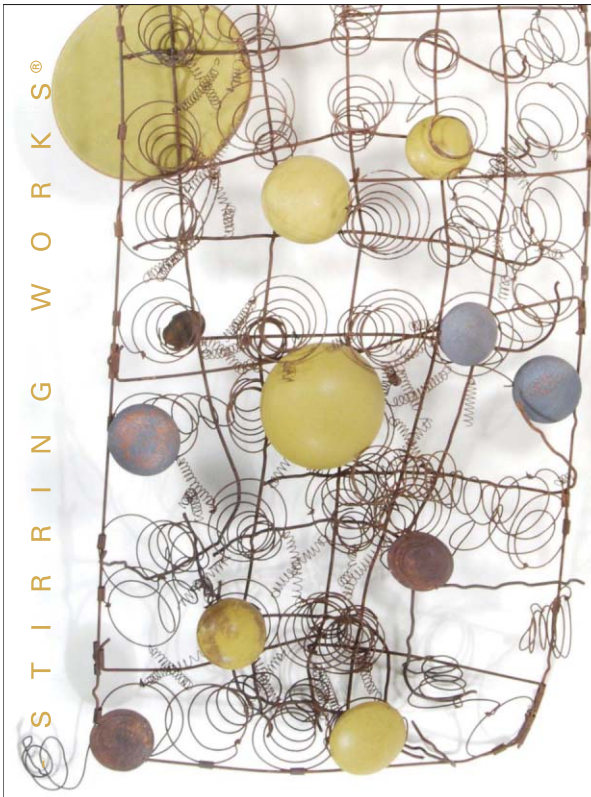

"Spring III" Polly Whitcomb, Sculpture

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June 31 Santa Fe Opera Opening
July 7 ART Santa Fe
July 8 Claire Kahn, Jewelry
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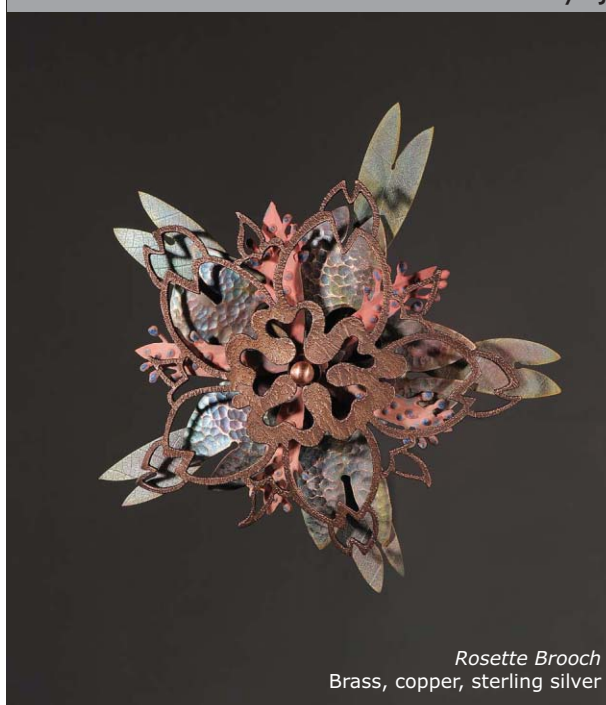

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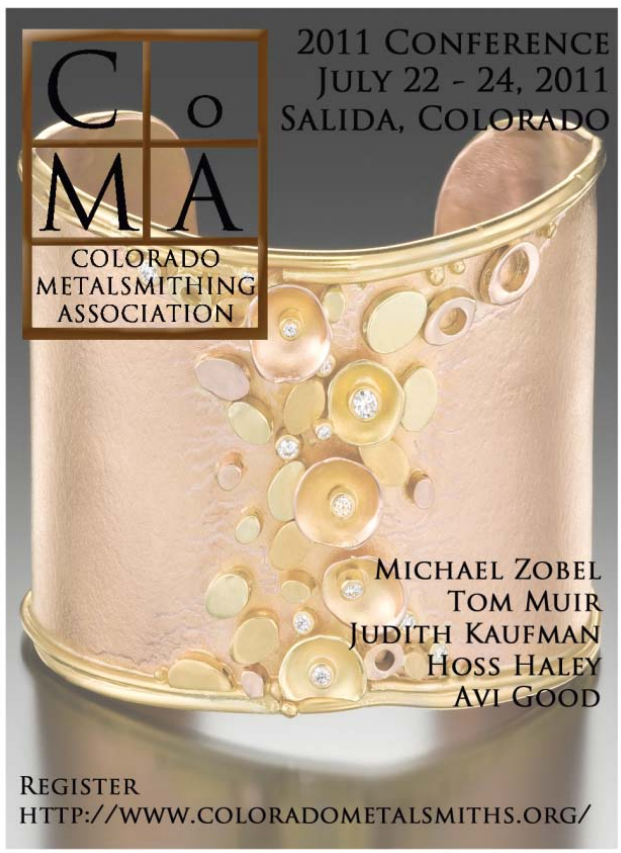

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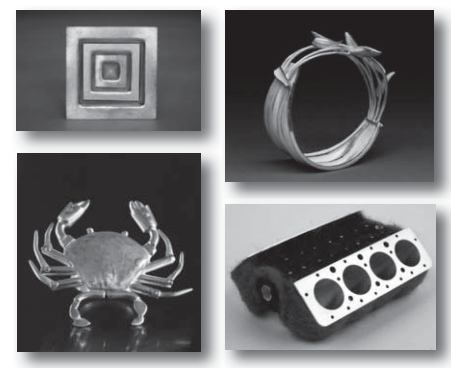

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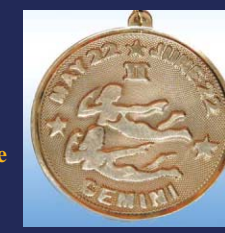

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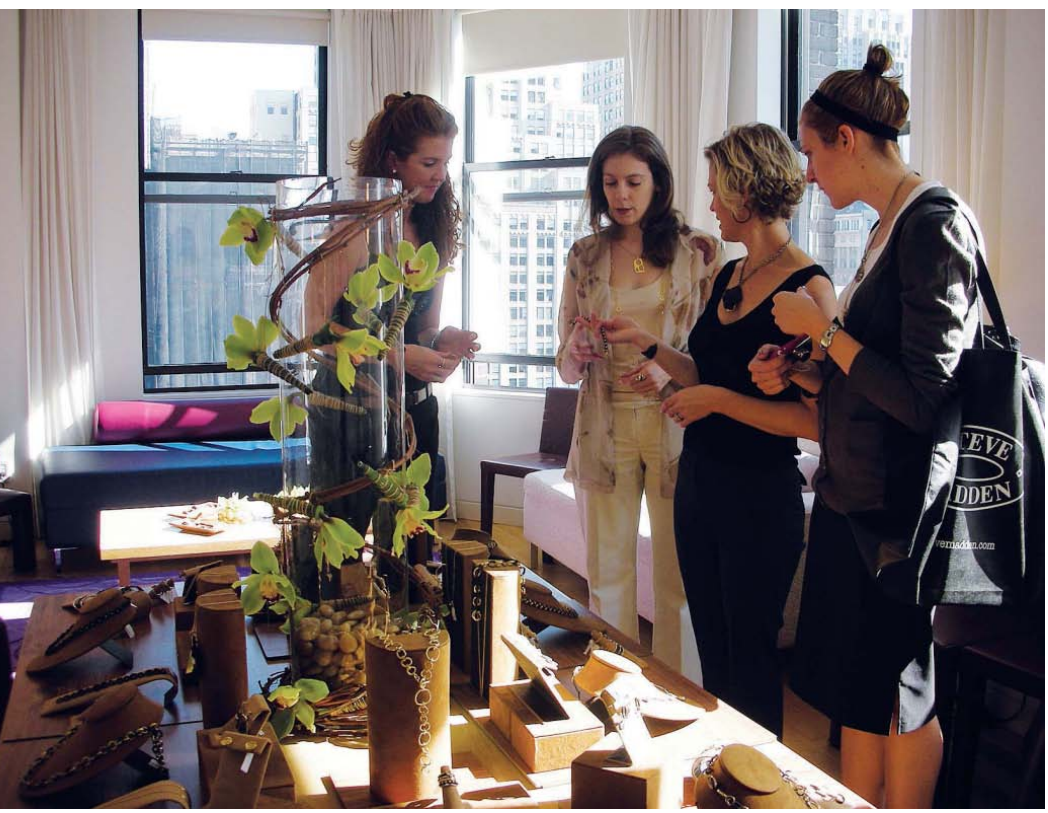
Linda Threadgill, *Rosette Brooch #1-11*, brass, copper, sterling

Sarah Graham
Having It All

BY ANDREA DINOTO

A MILLION-DOLLAR-A-year business doesn't just happen. Ask Sarah Graham, whose eponymous, San Francisco–based, wildly profitable company has been producing artful handmade jewelry in blackened steel and gold since 2000. Graham, 40, may be unique in the art jewelry field, in that her mastery of the business end of things is equal to her creative involvement. In fact, her commitment to having her own business came well before her specialization. "From the beginning I didn't expect I would be a jeweler," she says, "but I really loved business." Both her father, a CPA, and sister, a restaurateur, are dedicated businesspeople, and Graham found it easy to apply what she had learned in marketing courses to her eventually chosen work. "Once I got serious about jewelry," she says, "I immediately began to treat it like a business. I wrote a business plan, projected what I might sell, my expenses, how to market it." Today her jewelry, which retails for between $150 and $10,000, is available in 120 stores and galleries nationwide.

Graham's launch of her own business was carefully planned, the culmination of eight years of preparation. For two years she apprenticed with master goldsmith Ronald Hentges, in Carmel, California, then worked in three different jobs that taught her every aspect of the jewelry industry: managing a small jewelry store, where she also learned cutting and soldering; doing waxes and bench work for a manufacturer; and serving as a bench jeweler in a trade shop. "At lunch breaks and on weekends I worked on my own lines," she says. Graham quit the trade shop job, having given a year's notice, on the last day of 1999 and started Sarah Graham Metalsmithing on January 1, 2000. At a show in February of that year, Graham made her first sale to a store that "gave me a nice order and cash up front so that I could make it. I went only two months without income." Although Graham had brought a couple of different collections to the show, the steel-and-gold was the only line that sold. She explains that although blackened steel—technically cobalt chrome—appears weighty, it is in fact 60 percent lighter than gold. "It's challenging to work with," she says, citing its extreme hardness, which



Sarah Graham (second from right) with editors and buyers at a private showing during a press event in New York City, October 2009.

Stacking Rings, 2010
18k gold, oxidized cobalt chrome, black, white and cognac diamonds

Shadow Cuff and Ring, 2011
18k gold, oxidized cobalt chrome, white and cognac diamonds
2 ¾ x 1 ¾ x ¾"

Graham's most notable accomplishment may be the delicate balance she has achieved between her art, her business, and her personal life.

requires entirely different equipment and procedures from gold work. "It's a unique look, and what sells," she says, "is what customers have never seen before." Graham decided to focus exclusively on steel and gold, which she combines to create bold, stylish designs based upon organic forms. She offers rings, earrings, and necklaces in more than a dozen lines, with two new collections introduced every year. "Mr. Graham," a blackened-steel line for men, was introduced in 2010.

That the company has grossed more than $1 million every year for the last five years owes in no small measure to Graham's laserlike focus on every aspect of the business, from the high quality of the jewelry's design and fabrication to a tightly run office and an understanding of the importance of public relations and promotion. Graham's efforts to keep fashion editors informed, via photos, about her various collections has earned her extensive media placement. In 2004 she and her husband Michael Amato (co-owner and production manager of the company) moved to Los Angeles for two years expressly "to pursue the publicity thing." They hired a publicist, developed contacts with stylists, and succeeded in landing celebrity placements with both Kim Basinger and Sharon Stone. But Graham's most notable accomplishment may be the delicate balance she has achieved between her art, her business, and her personal life.

The arrival of a baby boy, Strummer, in October 2010 has curtailed, for a time, Graham's usual heavy travel schedule to major trade and trunk shows. Trunk shows are especially valuable, she says, because they offer an opportunity to make direct contact both with customers and gallery personnel. And by watching prospective customers try on her jewelry, Graham notices problems, perhaps difficult clasps, that need tweaking back at the studio, where a close-knit staff keeps things humming. Graham employs a full-time business manager (who happens to be her husband's sister); four full-time jewelers, plus Graham herself; a Web and IT specialist; three additional office people; and a sales rep, hired in 2009, who, says Graham, "has made a big difference in the business." But one of the staff's most important group activities has nothing to do with jewelry: they bake about 200 dozen chocolate chip cookies every Christmas as presents for clients. This gesture, says Graham, is "a thank you to all our stores and suppliers….They appreciate the personal touch, and the handmade aspect reinforces what we are all about."

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on arts and design.

Furthermore:
www.sarahgraham.com

Deb Karash
Accidental Jeweler

BY ANDREA DINOTO

EIGHT YEARS AGO, studio jeweler Deb Karash took the leap—into wholesale. She had been selling to galleries and at retail art fairs full-time since 1995, when she decided to bring her signature pencil-on-metal jewelry into the production arena. A wholesale approach to production implies both higher sales volume and more profit, but the tradeoff is more demanding recordkeeping, bookkeeping, invoicing, and other (for an artist) distracting and time-consuming responsibilities. Karash first tested the wholesale waters at the American Craft Council's show in Baltimore, where she did well. She succeeded in writing orders for up to $26,000 in sales and has continued on the wholesale track, which now represents about 80 percent of her income. At the same time, Karash continues to work with dozens of retail galleries around the country and to teach at craft schools—notably Penland, Arrowmont, and Mendocino Arts Center—as a workshop instructor. She has also helped establish a crafts co-op called Flow in her recently adopted hometown of Marshall, North Carolina, where a gathering of artists is turning a one-time industrial hub into a thriving creative community.

Karash, 55, grew up in Illinois, where she attended community college thinking she'd become a home economics teacher. But that idea was quickly scrapped in favor of art classes, including in fiber and clay, and a career move into retail fashion display. While continuing to work in display, Karash decided to return to school. She enrolled in Northern Illinois University at DeKalb, where at age 30 she received her B.A. and a few years later an M.A. in jewelry and metalsmithing. "I had the degree and thought it would be a hobby," she says, but as she started to do a few craft shows jewelry began to assume greater importance in her life. At the same time, she says, the display world was changing—"It was all just signage, not that creative anymore"—and though at 40 she was "scared to do a career change," she did, and began successfully to produce jewelry full time.

Karash works with mixed metals—sterling, copper, and brass—treated to give surfaces "tooth," so her marks with soft Prismacolor pencils will adhere. She also incorporates stones like turquoise and agate (and soon, diamonds) into her "intensively handmade," nature-inspired work for a layered effect, and credits her early experience in fashion display with having helped develop her color sense. Whether fabricating production or retail pieces, Karash makes all the work herself. Only a very few components are cast, like the stem of a flower, for example, and a few earrings are die cut. She hires part-time help only for "the hard part," i.e., the dreaded paperwork. "I only spend half my time doing creative work," she says.

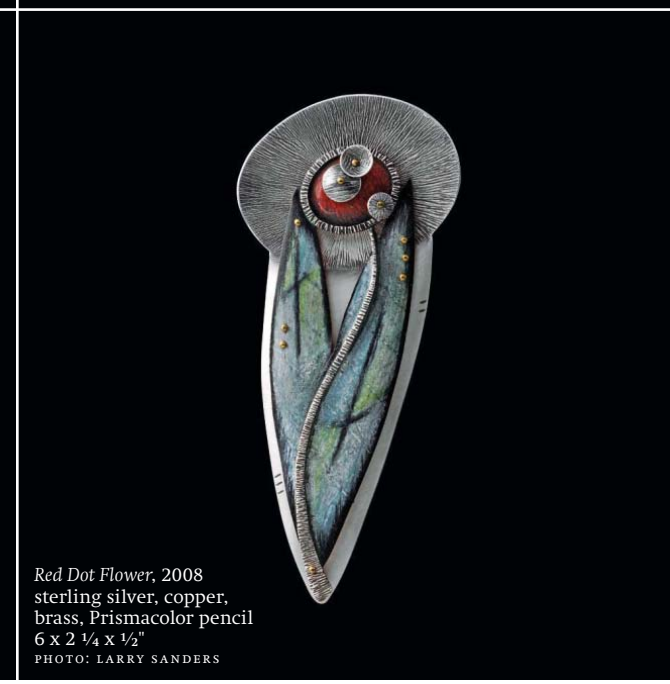
Wholesale differs from retail, "in that instead of making what you want on any given day, you have a commitment to a gallery, and it's very important to deliver when you say," Karash states. "You have to have a plan and know how much work you can produce in a given time." She notes that some art schools are starting to teach business skills, and she is pleased as well that SNAG now includes talks on business practices in their conferences. "When I spoke at SNAG's Chicago conference four or five years ago," she recalls, "there were maybe 30 people in the room, and it was an extra event." But when she spoke more recently, 300 people showed up for her PowerPoint presentation on doing craft shows: how to apply; the importance of having good jury images; planning your booth; security issues; and even basic etiquette among jewelers

Deb Karash with her works at the Flow artist's collective in downtown Marshall, North Carolina, 2010.
PHOTO: ROB AMBERG

Black Stripe Branch (pin/pendant), 2010
sterling silver, copper, brass, Prismacolor pencil
4 x 2 ½ x ½"
PHOTO: LARRY SANDERS

Pink Daisy (pin/pendant), 2010
sterling silver, copper, brass, Prismacolor pencil
2 ½ x 2 ½ x ½"
PHOTO: LARRY SANDERS

Marty's Brooch, 2010
sterling silver, copper, brass, Prismacolor pencil
2 ½ x 2 ½ x ½"
PHOTO: LARRY SANDERS



Red Dot Flower, 2008
sterling silver, copper, brass, Prismacolor pencil
6 x 2 ¼ x ½"
PHOTO: LARRY SANDERS

Instead of making what you want on any given day, you have a commitment to a gallery, and it's very important to deliver when you say.

(e.g., schmoozing in the booth is fine, but when a customer enters, all others know to leave). Getting accepted at craft shows is at the "whim of the jury," she says, and every year the jurors change. Competition is intense, especially at the major venues, like the Smithsonian Craft Show, which has 120 spots and about 1,500 applications every year. "Great shows generally do well" in terms of sales, says Karash, "but as jobs go, this is one of the least secure." Still, Karash is committed to her chosen "accidental" career, and while she has learned to efficiently manage her business, she says she would love to be able "to do nothing but make jewelry."

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on art and design.

Furthermore:
www.debkarash.wordpress.com

Andy Cooperman
Making It

BY JUDITH WAGONFELD

"I AM A PIT BULL," Andy Cooperman says. Not your usual self-characterization from a fine art jeweler. After all, he's a slight man, maybe five-and-a-half feet tall, dressed in a baggy black sweatshirt and jeans. Short salt-and-pepper hair, approachable smile, ready laugh, and quirky humor. Once, for a rock and roll dress-up party, he wore a necklace constructed of real rocks and stale rolls.

Cooperman owns a 1930s craftsman bungalow in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood, the kind that once housed Scandinavian fishermen and are now sought as fixer-uppers. But back in 1994, Cooperman and wife Kim saw it only as affordable. Learning on the fly, Cooperman altered rooms, crafted cabinets, built a kitchen, tiled bathrooms, and installed woodwork, metalwork, and shelving—and the house is still a work in progress. Painting remains Kim's bailiwick. He touts her hues of chartreuse, maize, and moss.

Inside, boxes cram nooks and crannies; cardboard obscures an unfinished floor. Rocks, a dolphin jawbone, books, and myriad salvaged artifacts nestle on shelves bordering the metal fireplace. A glass-topped coffee table showcases a stash of gifted jewelry. With childhood joy, Cooperman babbles about each item. We sip coffee at the ten-foot wooden table he made for the yard—a questionable endeavor in Seattle's soggy climate. The couple uses the sprawling table for their "rite of passage" parties, a tradition begun when Cooperman hit 50 and fabricated a ".5 Century" pin for himself. Quickly, he had a ".5 Club" of folk wearing these "Milestone" pins. Laughing, he says, "Many now require ".6" pins."

Cooperman has recently created several reliquaries, which bear the ashes of a client's loved one, as commissions. Viewing one's photo and remnants of their bones astounds him. He feels honored to be trusted with these intimate projects. Similarly, couples covet the wedding rings he fashions "not because they're art," he says, "but because marriage is a good thing to be part of." People seek his flawless craft for what he describes as *wabi-sabi*: an aesthetic of age, serenity, simplicity, wisdom, and spirituality.

Cooperman considered careers in marine biology, writing, and entomology, but a metals studio seduced him. After obtaining a Studio Arts/Literature degree from State University of New York at Oneonta, he mastered abrasives and shrinkage by making caps and teeth for an upstate New York dentist. Moving to the Northwest in 1984, he first made, repaired, and sold commercial pieces at Bender's Jewelry. Though he hated the repetition, he learned the language and techniques of jewelry, and observed how people wear it. When Kim completed her master's degree in nutrition in 1987, Cooperman quit working at the store, intent on creating "compelling, purposeful, and innovative pieces," he says. Since then, he's never held a day job.

Cooperman's motto, "Making is making," applies to all handwork. His garage studio, a mishmash of wall surfaces and flooring, has in real estate parlance, "character"; it's weak on design but is organized and functional. Dead tree branch racks hold antique and modern tools, as if tack in a stable. His jeweler's bench, pickling-oxidation station, and soldering table, all laden with implements and apparatus, await, a surgical suite ready for action.

Cooperman shows me samples of his artistic and production-style jewelry. Whether fabricated, forged, cast, soldered, or enameled, the pins, earrings, pendants, and rings annotate a history dating to his first amateurish silver ring. Thematically, he favors mystery, instilling puns and "factoids." The work unfolds slowly, requiring viewers to linger and "pry it apart with their eyes."

"Andy has an insane brain, a virtual encyclopedia," says artist friend Maria Phillips. Indeed, as we talk, esoteric facts roll off his tongue. "Do you know about royal jelly?" Cooperman remarks. I'm almost afraid to ask. "It's the secretion," he explains, "that turns a honey bee larvae into a queen." Hence his pendant *Royal Colony,* a sterling honeycombed sphere that speaks of being plucked from one fate and dropped in another. Perdue Chicken's slogan, "It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken," prompted *Ringtisserie,* a ring flaunting a

"Work," says Cooperman, "must be tactile and well made, because people are primates and they will play with it."

Sleeper Cell, 2009
burl wood, sterling silver, 24k gold leaf
2 ½ x 1 x ¾"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE

Coeur, 2010
ping-pong ball, velvet, sterling silver, gold, bronze
diameter 1 ¾"
PHOTO: ANDY COOPERMAN

miniature rubber chicken on a rotating barbecue spit. “Knowing a bit of the backstory,” says Cooperman, “changes the experience for clients.”

“I’m always going for small, quieter moments, imagery that resonates with my clients,” he says. Rather than theatrical flash, his archeological and organic nuggets transmit a visceral depth. Scars and marks nourish his surfaces as historical evidence, resulting in lush, dark patinas, lustrous hues, diverse granular and smooth surfaces, and convoluted negative and positive spaces. Biology yields arcane references to nataloids, seeds, a saw-toothed seaweed, insects, hummingbirds, snakes, and nests. Occasional political issues like Catholicism’s sex scandals seep in.

Cooperman’s former representative, Sharon Campbell, describes the jewelry as masculine. “Even when diminutive, it is never dainty,” she says. She loves that his jewelry backs match the perfection of the fronts; they’re as well rounded as he is. “He’s a full-circle person who teaches, lectures, and writes. And, he’s never lost his New York edge,” says Campbell.

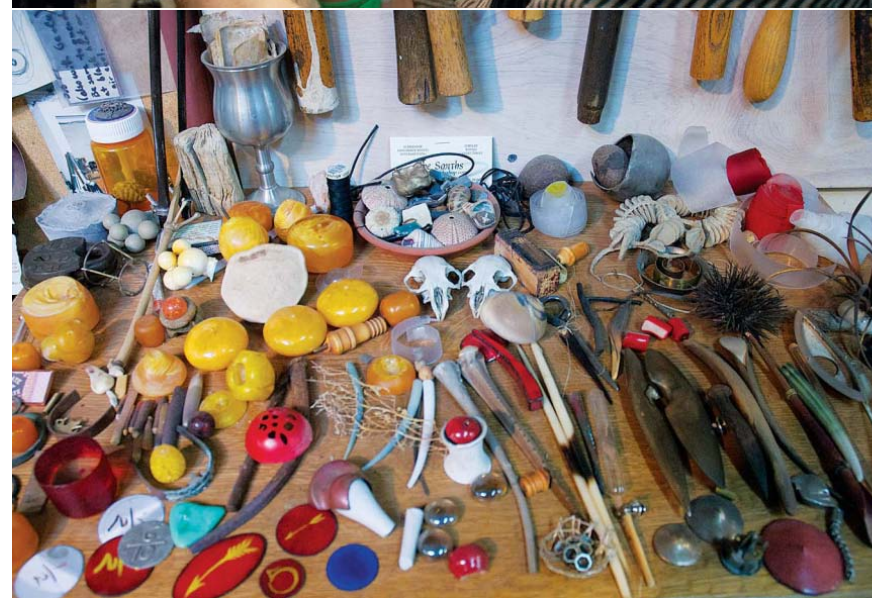
Cooperman is a prolific and challenging workshop leader. He describes two types of learners: “Pit bulls can be tamed, dialed back from excess and moved forward. Doves are so terrified of failure that they never light the torch.” He loves the interchange and incorporates subtle marketing. “I’ve sold buckles off the belts I’m wearing!” he laughs. Quite the antithesis of marketing to the wealthy.

“In the ’90s, gallery sales depended on a lot of hip people with a lot of scratch,” he says. “Now I probably buy my lattes from them.” Although successful in his art and teaching pursuits, Cooperman still strives to find a balance with pricing, marketing, sales, and clients. He’s contemplating studio visits, demonstrations, and web-based marketing, and is working on a jewelry technique book. His web site, cross-pollinates jewelry imagery with humorous essays for artists that include lines such as, “You can’t make an omelet without first breaking a few eggs,” and “Take risks sometimes. Kiss some ass if you have to—you won’t have to pucker forever.”

Currently, Cooperman is experimenting with brooches crafted of ping pong balls. Sliced in half and melted at the dome, they form a ragged orifice. In another realm he’s creating portable, structural objects that mount on wall brackets. Ultimately, Cooperman believes, success depends on maintaining a core concept and executing it well. It boils down to four principles: how the piece looks, fits on the body, appears in the display case, and, most importantly, how it feels in the hand.

“Work,” says Cooperman, “must be tactile and well made, because people are primates and they will play with it.” When people fondle his pieces like worry beads or rosaries, he knows he’s succeeded. And he’s as pleased as a pit bull with a bone.

Judith Wagonfeld is a freelance writer living in Seattle.



Andy Cooperman in his Seattle studio
PHOTO: JUDY WAGONFELD

View of Cooperman’s work bench.
PHOTO: JUDY WAGONFELD

Furthermore:
www.andycooperman.com

Steampunk Future Past

BY KAREN CHRISTIANS

WHAT EXACTLY IS Steampunk? Shades of the movement have pervaded art, design, craft, and entertainment over recent years. One of the vital voices of the genre, writer and historian G.D. Falksen, states, "In three short words, Steampunk is Victorian science fiction." During Queen Victoria's reign, the use of steam to drive mechanical objects in both England and the United States fueled many inventions and gave birth to the Industrial Revolution. Today, says Falksen, "Steampunk uses this existing technology and structure to imagine an even more advanced nineteenth century, often complete with Victorian-inspired wonders like steam-powered aircraft and mechanical computers."

In 1984, film director David Lynch brought Frank Herbert's science fiction epic *Dune* to the cinema, decades before computer graphics dominated the screen, using handmade models and much imagination. Although at the time it was not a critical or economic success, *Dune* featured enduring and striking visuals, a merger of Victorian ornament and technology, and offered both groundbreaking cinema and a foretaste of the Steampunk sensibility.

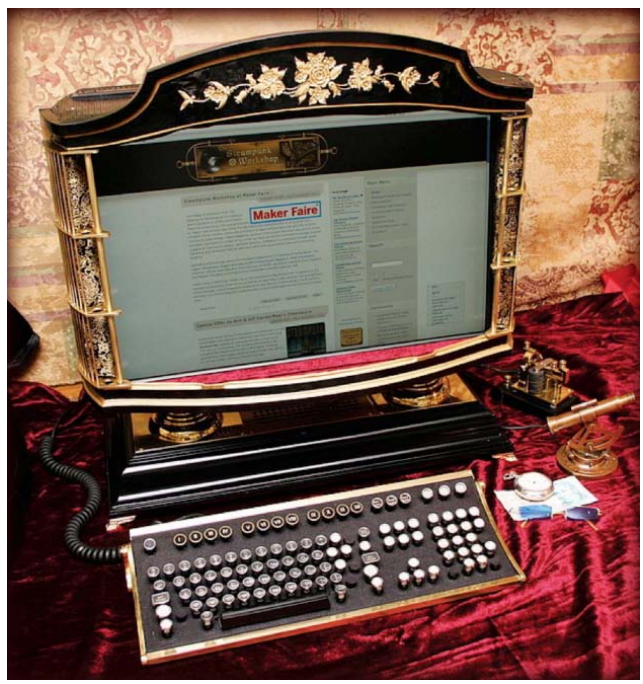
Steampunk is a fruitful hybrid of low and high tech. A perfect embodiment of this merger is found in the *Victorian All In One PC* by Jake Van Slatt, a Boston information technology guru by day and uber Steampunk fabricator by night. In a 2007 *Wired* magazine article, Van Slatt stated, "The Victorian era was really the last era in which a high school graduate was given the complete set of scientific concepts to fully understand the technology of the age. Because of this, part of what I wanted to do was to co-opt the term 'steampunk' and imbue it with this DIY component."

In the visual arts, Steampunk expresses itself as a low-tech survivalist attitude aspiring to artistic grace.

In the visual arts, Steampunk expresses itself as a low-tech survivalist attitude aspiring to artistic grace. The concepts of time, motion, disassembly, and reassembly are recurring features in this work, often represented by pocket watches and gears. The Steampunk movement does not have a singular style; it is collaborative, imaginative, and participatory, with a spirit of rich allegory and metaphor.

The *Backpack Time Traveling Device* by Andrea Lynn consists of tubing, wiring, a keypad and live mice. Once the switch is flipped, electricity draws on the mice's life force to deliver the adventurer back in time. Two mice are needed per trip, and the backpack can only be used once (preferably to correct a unfortunate event). Lynn says, "I love that I can turn my body into a work of art. I feel like it is the only kind of art that I can share with people." She is further attracted to the use of historical objects because they are "beautiful, detailed, and connect to my post–World War I family roots." Says Lynn, "I have artifacts from my family that are graceful and precise." "I want my art to reflect this."

Since 2006, I have attended Burning Man, the annual non-commercial arts festival outside of Reno, Nevada, in the Black Rock Desert. This six-square-mile "happening" has become an exciting incubation studio for Steampunk production. Despite the 95-degree heat, dust storms, and challenging living conditions, the event attracts all kinds of wondrous contraptions, art cars, costumes, warriors, and people, many walking with piles of found objects, each with a purpose and story. To the festival for several years a



JAKE VAN SLATT
Victorian All In One PC, 2008
modified personal computer

band of Berkeley-based artists, engineers, and craftsmen have contributed the "Neverwas Haul," a self-propelled three-story Victorian house made from 75 percent recycled equipment and materials. Another captivating Jules Verne–inspired vehicle at the 2010 proceedings was *The Golden Mean* a giant iron snail built by California-based blacksmith Jon Sarriugarte with his wife Kyrsten Mate.

Until recently, much of Steampunk jewelry involved simple watch gears, hearts, lockets, and keys. But in the past few months, production jewelers like Erica Weiner and Mike Libby of Insect Lab are pushing the boundaries of metaphoric art. Their intricate attention to detail, thoughtfulness, and fabrication excellence combines with historical reference and metaphor. "The work of Insect Lab is like a good old fashioned radio show, one where the viewer can take cues from what is presented to them and actively engage in their imagination to bring the work to life," says Libby. "It is as much about wonder, fantasy, and storytelling as it is about making spiffy and elegant-looking robotic bugs."

A recent visit to a warehouse in Rhode Island filled with antique jewelry manufacturing tools brought home the attraction of Steampunk to me as an artist. It was wonderful and tragic to see 9,000 square feet of neglected yet beautiful hand-cut dies, specialty lathes, and chain machines from the 1900s sitting idle, barely used. A scale, manufactured in Europe in the 1920s, had for its indication of measurement two delicately carved crane heads, whose opposing beaks when aligned are in perfect balance. This is the artistic essence of Steampunk: transforming what is now digital and minimal back into an ornamental functionalism.

Steampunk is the antithesis of our digital age. New generations of children who grew up with computers, which are as common to them as the telephones of my generation, are building and becoming fabricators. The Maker Faires in California and New York are filled with tens of thousands of young kids soldering, grabbing hobby kits to build basic blinking lights on a badge, and creating the hand-eye skill needed for fabricating art. *Popular Mechanics* gives way to *Make* magazine.

JON SARRIUGARTE AND KYRSTEN MATE
The Golden Mean, 2008
altered 1966 VW Bug
PHOTO: KAREN CHRISTIANS

Respinning beauty into mundane or ubiquitous objects is proving to be both attractive and lucrative. The masses of thirty-somethings who use their iPhones, Kindles, and laptops are hungry for ornamentation. Their nostalgia is not for the 1950s; it's for the 1890s, with all the beauty of an imaginary industrial age translated into new products. Will the students of tomorrow practice cursive writing; will they even hold a pen in their hands? Steampunk is steaming along, bridging old and new, and the ways in which it is transforming art with its historical technology, quality fabrication, and attention to detail is progressing at lightning speed.

Today's metalsmiths need to learn how to use lathes and old world technology in order to create fresh and exciting work for a new generation. Steampunk demands thoughtfulness, excellence in execution, and a standard of beauty. The movement is also rooted in storytelling. We love to hold old, elegantly constructed jewelry in our hands, but we also marvel at kinetics. Steampunk offers this generation a path to merge our fascination with technology with the drive to make beautiful art.

Karen Christians is a jewelry tool designer, educator, author and founder of Cleverwerx.

MIKE LIBBY/INSECT LAB
Buprestidae: Euchroma Gigantae, 2011
beetle, brass gears, spring
width 4"

Furthermore:
www.steampunkworkshop.com
www.crmi.org
www.ericaweiner.com
www.insectlabstudio.com
www.burningman.com
www.steampunkmagazine.com
www.victoriantradingco.com
www.makerfaire.com

Charles Lewton-Brain
Politically Correct?

POLITICAL JEWELRY has always interested me, as a wearable statement of belief, critique, and activism. Velvet da Vinci gallery's "Anti-War Medals" shows, which began in 2003, provided an opportunity to which several hundred jewelers responded; a couple of artists included here are from those exhibitions, as well as from the "I Care A Lot" (Middle East Portable Discussion) jewelry project. Thomas Mann's longstanding commitment to making and exhibiting political work should also be acknowledged. However, political jewelry seems harder to find than I expected. I have a suspicion that perhaps, like erotic jewelry, political jewelry is made and shared, but does not necessarily get exhibited or published much. At least that is what I hope. The people I have chosen are those whose work I enjoy, and who engage the type of political commentary I most respond to.

Charles Lewton-Brain is a master goldsmith, educator, and publisher of Brain Press.

NICHOLAS ESTRADA
Scapular 1 (necklace), 2003
silver, plastic, thread

MARIA FERNANDA MONTIEL, SOFIA PRADO AND MARIANA ARMELLA
Golfo, 2010
ceramic, pearl, black enamel
ENTRY FOR THE "IIDA 2010: GREEN HEART" DESIGN COMPETITION, ORGANIZED BY DESIGNBOOM.COM
PHOTO: ARIETTE ARMELLA

MIGUEL LUCIANO
Plátano Pride, from
"Pure Plantainum" series (2006)
chromogenic print
40 x 30"
image of
Pure Plantainum Pendant, 2006
platinum plated plantain, chain
approx. 3 x 12 x 3"

GITTE NYGAARD
C 0.68, 2010
binchotan (white charcoal from
carbonized oak wood), 14k certified,
sustainable gold from Oro Verde
2 x 1"
PHOTO: PETRA VAN VELZEN

VICTORIA SANCHEZ
Stereotype X in an Unfortunate Series, 2010
found objects, plastic
each 16 x 6 ½"
PHOTO: FABY MARTIN

EINAT LEADER
'Middle East precipitation forecast, 14.03.10 -21.03.10' (brooch), 2010, from the "Slow Jewelry Reacts Fast" series
sterling silver, embroidery thread
3 ½ x 5 ⅞"
PHOTO: EINAT LEADER

SALLY VON BARGEN
Elegy (Monumental Neckpiece), 2008
brass, paper, digital photographs, paint
30 x 18 x 4"
PHOTO: ICANDI STUDIO

(detail)

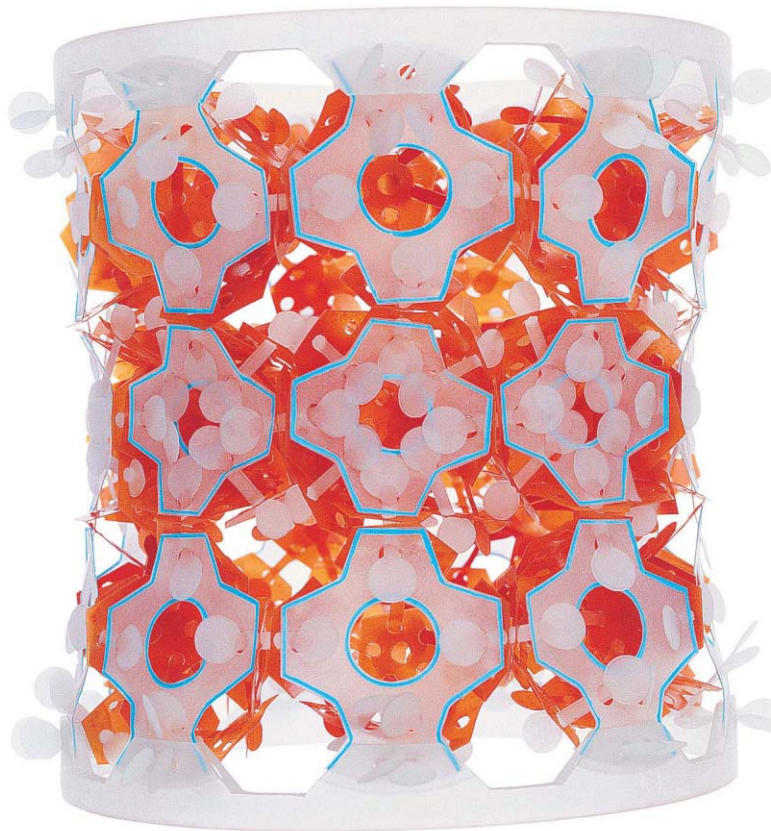
(detail)

SHARI PIERCE
34 Sex Offenders and 2 Sexual Predators from Within a 5-Mile Radius, 2010
silk, photo prints from transparencies
length 67"
PHOTO: MASON DOUGLAS

Furthermore:
www.icarealot.me
www.velvetdavinci.com

Svenja John
Jewelry Auteur

BY MARJORIE SIMON



Lapido (bracelet), 2001
polycarbonate
width 4 3/8"
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER

Breath (brooch), 2001
polycarbonate
diameter 3 ½"
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER

OF JEWELRY MAKING, German artist Svenja John muses, "I think you must be an auteur." Coined by French film director Jacques Truffaut, the term describes directors whose command of the medium, technical competence, personal style, and "authorship" of their work is unmistakable. John believes jewelers must do no less: they must "own" their work, it should be well made, and like that of no one else. If this is true, John is the Werner Herzog of polycarbonate, the plastic from which all of her jewelry is made.

Plastic can no longer be considered an alternative material in jewelry. "Auteur jewelry" is already being made from many different kinds of prime and recycled materials. Assembled like some ethereal yet indestructible twenty-first-century origami architecture, John's kaleidoscopic brooches and bracelets are sliced and slotted from flat sheet into three dimensions, resulting in a fractured repetition of elemental colored forms. As if seen through a microscope, the pieces recall scientific models of crystalline, organic structures such as diatoms, or tumbling pollen grains realized in international colors: Dutch orange, Caribbean blue, Mexican yellow. *Maros*, a bracelet from 2002, resembles nothing so much as a blastula, the early embryonic stage in animal development. Transparent, it contains a secret collection of colored nuclei.

The potency of John's jewelry stems from her skill in balancing form and color. She uses color visually and emotionally, deftly pairing and contrasting complementary hues and playing with translucency and opacity. Asked about her "heroes" or influences, she names American painters Frank Stella and Peter Halley, artists who use light and color in geometric arrangement, though in truth her understanding of color puts her in league with the Impressionists too. As a colorist, Halley does seem to be a kindred spirit. John's translucent jewelry is reminiscent of Halley's palette of near-fluorescent, urban pink, aqua, orange, and acid green. And like Halley, her themes have to do with repetition and change, expressed through color.

John works exclusively in Makrolon brand polycarbonate,

Bugi (bracelet), 1996
polycarbonate
width 2 ¾"
PHOTO: JÖRG FAHLENKAMP

The potency of John's jewelry stems from her skill in balancing form and color.

a thermoplastic polymer manufactured by Bayer AG and known in the United States as Lexan. It is lightweight, stable, strong, flexible, and almost infinitely recyclable. Easily worked, molded, and thermoformed, it is highly impact resistant, and able to tolerate a wide temperature range.[1] Due to its high refractive index, it retains a luminous translucency, even when abraded. Like metal, Lexan can be bent on a brake at room temperature or in a tight radius while cold. It absorbs paint and the surface can be sanded to a frosty finish and otherwise treated much like metal. Among its many uses are numerous medical applications, eyeglass lenses, riot shields, CDs and CD cases, toys, bulletproof windows, automobile headlights, and greenhouse enclosures.

Born in 1963, the year of President Kennedy's triumphal visit to Berlin, John grew up in Duisberg, an ancient town in the great steel-producing Ruhr region of West Germany. She came of age during a divided Germany and now lives in Berlin, an international city with its own haunted past. After studying archaeology at Ruhr University for[2] two years, her true interest prevailed and she went to study goldsmithing at the Goldsmith's School (Staatliche Zeichanakadamie Hanau) in Hanau, an industrial town that has been a leading center of jewelry manufacturing since the sixteenth century.

German education for jewelers is a long and thorough process. Higher education is followed by technical training, which is itself followed by a "Master's Diploma." Students must have "praxis," a practicum with a working artist; as many as ten years might elapse between entering university and emerging into the field as a working jeweler. It goes without saying that by the time these young jewelers enter the world arena, they are skilled and confident practitioners. John received her first degree in Hanau in 1989. A few months later came the first of two global events to affect the course of her career: the fall of the Berlin Wall.

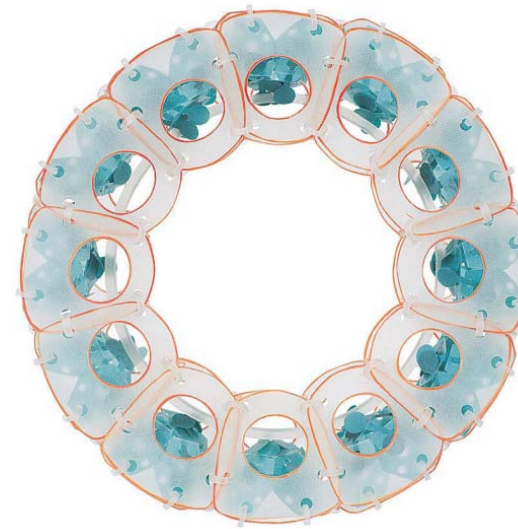
The full impact of German reunification may not be clear to outsiders, especially to Americans.[3] The partition and occupation that followed World War II affected the arts, as well as every other part of German culture. In contrast to the dominance of social realism in the East, "in West Germany the pluralistic movements of the postwar Moderns were influential," says art historian Dr. Renate Luckner Bien.[4] Yet both East and West shared the values of "usability, artisanal perfection, simplicity, [and] appropriate materials" in the decorative arts.[5] In the end, the postwar period led to very different kinds of jewelry. Until 1989 East German artists worked in virtual isolation. Because materials were scarce, they were accustomed to improvising, and their work had a raw and primeval beauty.[6] As a student in West Germany in the 1980s, John was certainly aware of the differences between East and West German artists. Then after 1989, everything changed. A unified Berlin meant not

only a larger community of jewelry artists, but also access to inexpensive and available East Berlin real estate. The city was on its way to becoming the vibrant and creative center that it is today.

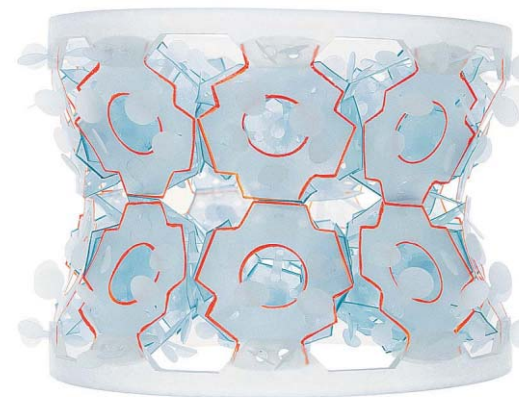
In 1991 John returned to school in Hanau for her Master's Diploma, and it was during this time that a professor introduced her to polycarbonate. Then, with her newly minted degree and several years' experience behind her (between degrees she supported herself and learned the value of benchwork by designing for industry in platinum), she headed for Berlin. She joined a group of seven young companies who shared an old factory floor in an affordable neighborhood near the former Wall. Among them was an advertising studio whose proactive approach to marketing helped her get the word out about her exciting and original plastic jewelry. She began to attract a new client base outside traditional goldsmithing circles. In the studio she fabricated her new jewelry from sheets of polycarbonate film, cutting out the multiple parts by hand with nail scissors. She was aware of waterjet cutting, a cold cutting process controlled by computer, but it was not until 1996 and 1997 that she began to have components cut with this technique.

In the spring of 1996, a pregnant friend invited John to take over her booth at the prestigious Ambiente Frankfurt trade fair, and for the first time John presented her polycarbonate jewelry to an international audience. She showed only two bracelet designs. Taking advantage of the material's lack of preciousness, she jettisoned the vitrine, and the kinetic, colorful polygons, displayed openly on tables, communicated an unexpected intimacy with buyers. Her fresh designs, in riotous color, supported by her goldsmith's craftsmanship, created quite a buzz. *Bugi* (1996), a free-form bracelet reminiscent of a Judy Pfaff sculpture with its wildly patterned polychrome elements, anticipated the more integrated designs to come. It would not be an overstatement to say that this exhibition and the ensuing connections she made catapulted John onto the international design map, and she immediately began accumulating awards and prizes. For one thing, the manufacturers of Makrolon supported her because of her innovative use of their material. In 1999, she won the Landespreis Berlin, an international design prize, then twice received the Bayerischer Staatspreis, Munich, and the coveted Herbert Hofmann Prize in Munich in 2004.

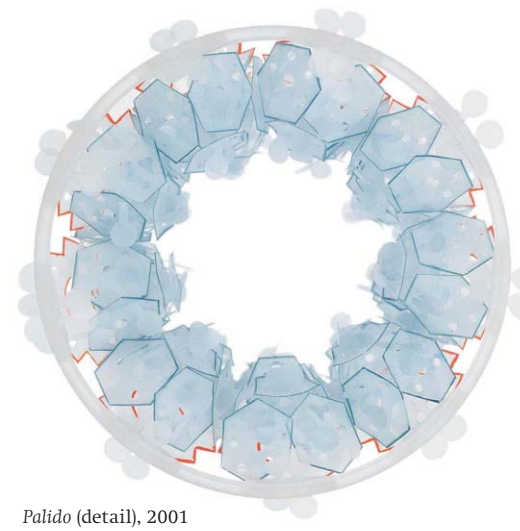
In 1997, John's *Bracelet No. 1*, a combination of white painted plastic and stainless steel parts, was shown in an issue of *Design Report*, a design magazine printed in Germany but published worldwide. The same year, John's jewelry was then shown at the opening exhibition of the Material ConneXion headquarters, a global materials consultancy in New York,[7] which led to an invitation to Premiere Classe, a Paris Fashion Week accessory trade fair considered to be indispensable for fashion designers.[8] After a few years at Premiere Classe, John met haute couture designer Christian Lacroix, who asked her to design jewelry for his 1999–2000 and 2000–01 collections. Those years



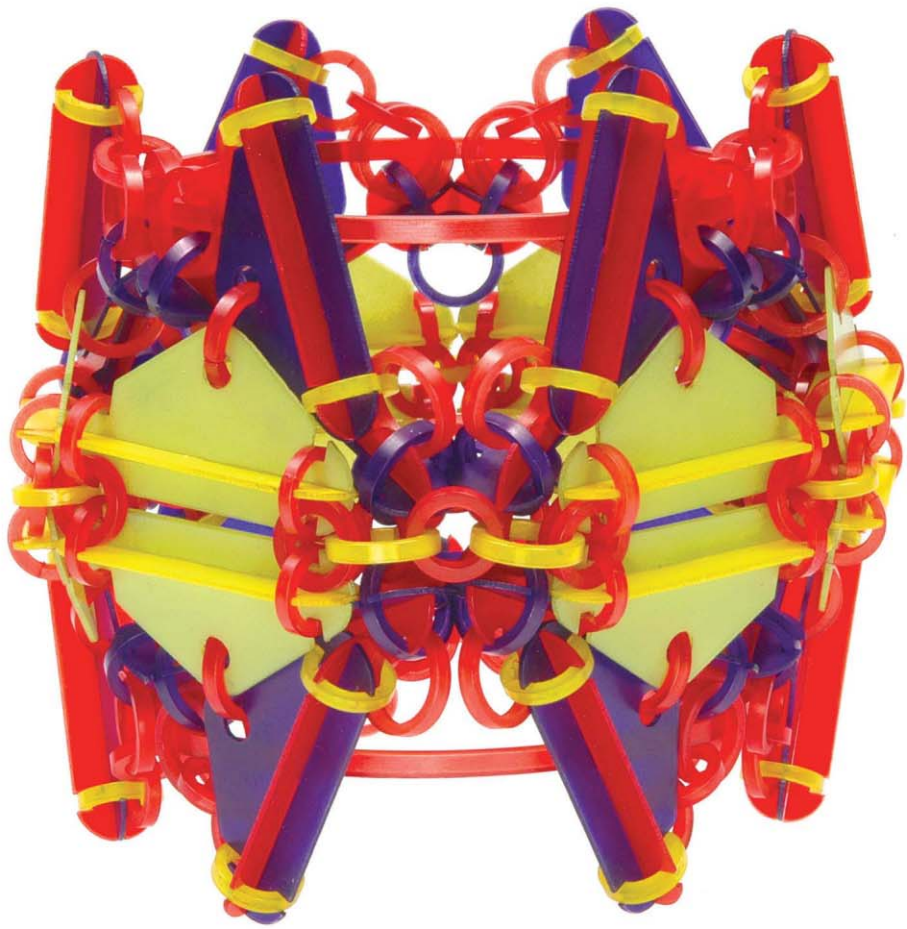
Maros (bracelet), 2002
polycarbonate
width 3 ⅛"
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER



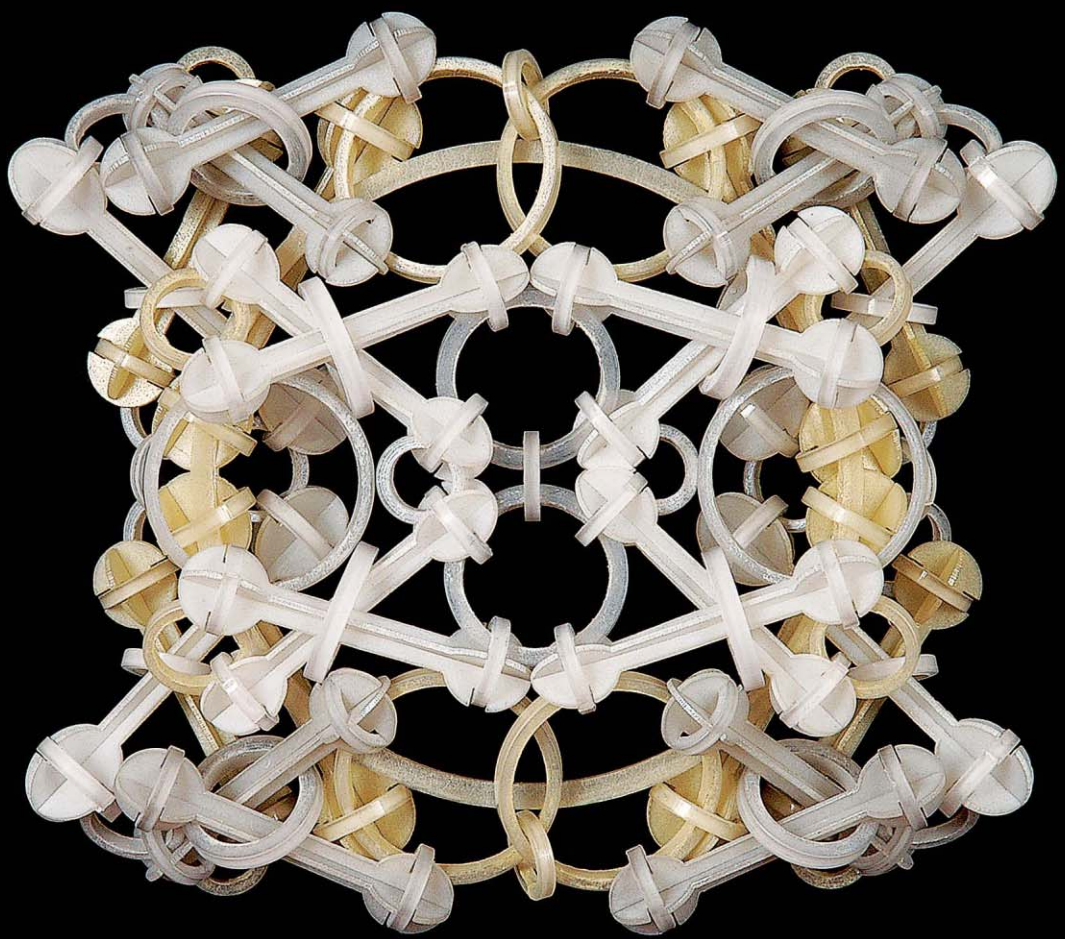
Palido (bracelet), 2001
polycarbonate
width 3 ⅛"
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER



Palido (detail), 2001
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER

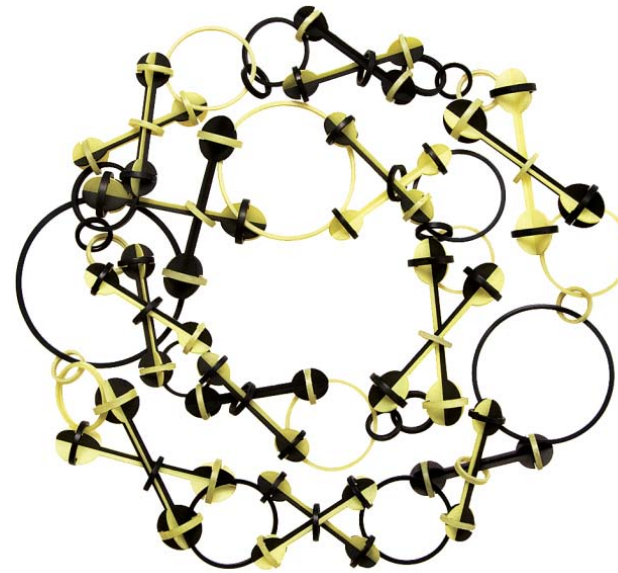


Rudny (bracelet), 2007
polycarbonate
width 3 ½"
PHOTO: TIVADAR NEMESI



Orel (brooch), 2007
polycarbonate
4 x 4 ¼ x ¾"
PHOTO: TIVADAR NEMESI

Lipka (brooch), 2010
polycarbonate
diameter 4 3/8"
PHOTO: TIVADAR NEMESI



X001 (necklace), 2004
polycarbonate
length 22 3/4"
PHOTO: SILKE MAYER

were a youthful hive of hyperkinetic activity, deadlines, and Parisian excitement.

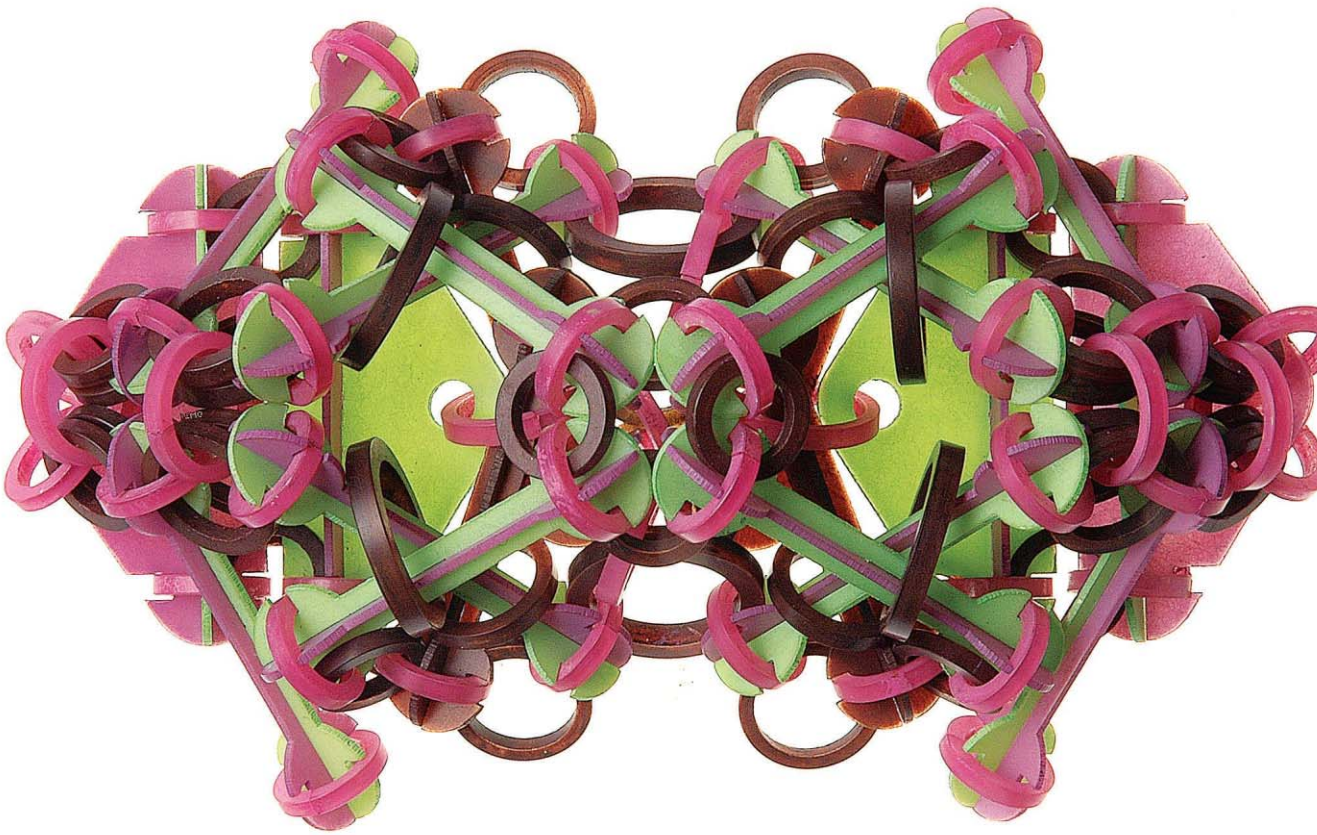
Then came the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the collapse of the international luxury market. John says, "All the foreign customers who normally visited the fashion shows in Europe, especially Paris, canceled their flights." The two years it took to recover was too long for many small independent designers to wait. Fortunately, John had begun to show her work in art jewelry galleries, the first being Gallery Biro in Munich, the only gallery specializing in all plastic jewelry. Since then she has had more than 25 solo exhibitions in Germany, Italy, Australia, Japan, Holland, and the United States, and her work is in museum collections in nearly all of those places. Her jewelry has been shown at Schmuck in Munich on numerous occasions and was first presented to American audiences at SOFA/NY by Jewelerswerk Galerie as early as 2002. In 2009 she was invited to spend two months in residence in Australia, and in 2010 she became an artist in residence at University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Another "hero" is the indefatigable Dutch designer and auteur jeweler Gijs Bakker. John admires Bakker for at once designing multiples, one-offs, and objects for use, while commanding significant prices for his work. Like Bakker John controls all aspects of her work, from installations to catalogue presentations. Under her direction, for example, the models in the photos make eye contact with the camera, reinforcing jewelry's fundamental human connection. Work represented in her first catalogue published in 2003, called simply *Svenja John*, floats ethereally on the page, allowing light to illuminate the layers and interior structures. Because the images are larger than life, the pieces' miraculous construction is visible, allowing viewers to see how a component might be configured to create an entirely new form with an entirely different emotional valence.

Although John produces her bracelets in series, each one is unique, with designs reconfigured with new colors every six months. She also adjusts the size of her bracelets every two years because arm diameter is increasing. Most titles of works are chosen almost at random from an atlas, tiny villages that have meaning only to her. To English speakers they read like the faintly quizzical names of IKEA furniture.

All of John's jewelry is produced in editions, though the coloring of each piece is unique. The evolution of her "Breath" series of brooches (2001) shows this process. *Breath 01*, a dense, transparent cluster of petals, seems a whisper of thistle in a field of summer sunlight. As if later in the day, in the blue of late afternoon, *Breath 02* takes on a cooler

Sketch for *Kabake*
brooch, 2007



Kabake (brooch), 2007
polycarbonate
4 ¼ x 2 ½ x 1 ⅜"
PHOTO: TIVADAR NEMESI

Svenja John composing *Nowa Nowa* (sculpture), 2009
polycarbonate
diameter 5' 3"
PHOTO: MARCUS FOLEY

Svenja John's workbench with studio rags and paint, where?, 2010
PHOTO: MARJORIE SIMON

palette in lavender. The trifolate heart shape emphasizes its triangular stability. In *Breath 03* another change of palette dominated by an even cooler green makes it appear even more solid. A muted undertone of complementary orange, seen behind a translucent structural layer, enlivens what might otherwise be monochrome. Re-imagined once again in red, the simply-titled *Breath* becomes a solid-looking scarlet hydrangea.

John's work from the early 2000s is densely three-dimensional. *Palido*, one of a bracelet series, is an icy, futuristic cousin to Barbara Seidenath's contemporaneous enamel brooches, in its chilly transparency and suggested glacial strata, cracks rimmed with the glow of the long rays of the rising or setting sun. Shown in the catalogue shot from overhead, it seems to be *Maros* turned inside out, revealing its cellular structure. "Palido" translates from Spanish or Portuguese as pale, colorless, or white, any one of which applies to its implied fragility. Another in the series, with the title *Lapido* (an anagram of *Palido*) suggests stones used by more conventional traditional jewelers.

Reconfigured components continue to tumble from John's workbench. *Rudny* (2007), possibly named for a Russian village, is a taut spiky spidery circlet, reminiscent of a sleeping bat; unfolding and dominated by opaque primary colors, it seems the opposite of the ethereal *Maros*. The bleached bones of *Orel* (2007), (an area in Russia) emphasize the connections rather than the form. Many pieces from this time use an X and O combination that offers a maximum flexibility in both linear and volumetric design. Barbell-shaped connectors have elongated to femur-like

solidity and the whole configuration emphasizes the angularity of line and connections. The recent *Lipka* (2010) (referring to a group of Lithuanian Tatars) is airier, lighter, stripped of its contents, an opaque desert star in sand and yellow or a glance back to the '70s.

"Series X001," from 2004, marks the beginning of John's newest work, with interlocking X structure, in which the connecting elements actually become the structure. The new handbags and "X001" series of necklaces are cut from heavier stock than the foil used in earlier work. In general, the work has become more linear, cleaner, lighter in feel, and more accessible. With the handbags, John has become, like Bakker, more of a product designer. As varied as the brooches have been, the necklaces appear to offer virtually endless variations of point and line linkages. According to German curator and journalist Gabi Dewald, in this work "light plays an entirely new role....it now flashes in points of brilliance on the corners and edges of the jewelry which twists and turns as the wearer moves."[9] It's the perfect travel jewelry in an age of metal detectors: lightweight, boldly ornamental, yet with little intrinsic value.

Ultimately, what elevates John's plastic jewelry above a sea of recycled handicrafts is that she speaks the language of classical goldsmithing. The basic building blocks of her unit constructions allow her to create a dizzying variety of configurations. The individual linkages look simple, but like the lock-and-key assembly of proteins, they form strong, stable, flexible bonds that can be applied to assembly on any scale. In 2009 she had the opportunity to prove it. Following an exhibition at Gallery Funaki in Melbourne, Australia, she traveled to Nungurner, Victoria, to the shared studio of Dore Stockhausen, a friend from goldsmith school, and Marcus Foley,[10] where she completed a sculpture commission for a private client. She created the fully three-dimensional orb, more than five feet in diameter, as a gargantuan version of a classic brooch—dense, ingenious, lightweight and light-diffusing—transported it by train to Melbourne, and assembled it onsite. After years of manipulating her modular elements, John knows exactly how pieces will fit together and she can easily visualize their assembly. John frequently envisions her works while she is on vacation, at the seashore in France, relaxed and away from her studio. Working from models cut from travel postcards, she creates the components of the next series. *Kabake* (2007) looks like an x-ray of a louse, and probably makes sense only to John herself. Filled in with color, it gains more of its eventual personality. Such sketches become computer-generated drawings of elements that will then be cut by waterjet.

After receiving all of the components, John begins the task of detailing each piece. They may be hand-sanded before painting. Up to three coats of specially selected paint are applied and manipulated with squares of carefully chosen 100 percent cotton cloth. The soft cotton, like an old diaper, absorbs exactly the right amount of paint, leaving behind exactly the right amount of color. Edges and planes are each treated differentially. By using sheets of Makrolon up to four times thicker than the film she started with, John now has visible edges to hold a volume of paint, giving her more color possibilities. This new group of brooches contains elements more openly suggestive of space travel, rockets aimed toward each other. Saturated complementary colors, cool aqua on top with hot orange visible beneath, form a skeletal but sturdy scaffolding with no sight of the ground below.

Ultimately, what elevates John's plastic jewelry above a sea of recycled handicrafts is that she speaks the language of classical goldsmithing.

Svenja John is emblematic of the many contradictions that characterize modern life. Americans and Westerners valorize the new while searching for roots. Born to a country riven by war in ways most Americans cannot even imagine, John has wedded her ebullient enthusiasm to a German sense of order in the service of jewelry, giving expression to that which remains constant—geometry and nature—in a completely manmade material. She has, perhaps without intention, successfully addressed a conundrum of the decade: she appears to have anticipated the coming economic downturn and stratospheric cost of precious metals by continuing to produce original wearable art in an industrial material. She believes her choice of material is modern, but the way she uses it and the way she puts it together show an age-old respect for craftsmanship and order. As John says, "I am German, after all."

Marjorie Simon is a Philadelphia-based jeweler and writer.

1. See video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hsls5ZPCUnE
2. It is worth noting, however, that John grew up in a society in which making jewelry mattered. The Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin, the new Museum of Technology, devotes an entire exhibit hall to Jewelry Manufacture, equating it with Air and Space, Navigation, Rail, Photography, and other important technologies. All the tools, machines and processes are illustrated in a life-size walk-through shop, which also contains a working "goldsmith's workbench."
3. The gulf between American educational orientation and the more conceptual approach of Europeans in general, as well as the attention given to visiting West Germans such as Klaus Bury and Hermann Junger in particular in the 1970s and 80s, tended to obscure the very different situations in the East and West.
4. Renata Luckner-Bien in Collection Feldversuch- Klasse Dorothea Pruhl (Nijmegen, Netherlands: The Marzee Collection, 2004), p. 44.
5. Ibid., p. 43.
6. To compare typical jewelry from East and West Germany see the following books: Klasse Dorothea Pruhl, op. cit., and Munchner Goldschmiede, Schmuck und Gerat 1993, Munchner Stadtmuseum, Munich, Germany.
7. www.materialconnexion.com
8. www.premiere-classe.com
9. Gabi Dewald, on Velvet da Vinci website www.velvetdavinci.com/show.php?sid=124.
10. See *Nowa Nowa* sculpture

Furthermore:
www.svenja-john.de
www.jewelerswerk.com
www.galleryfunaki.com.au

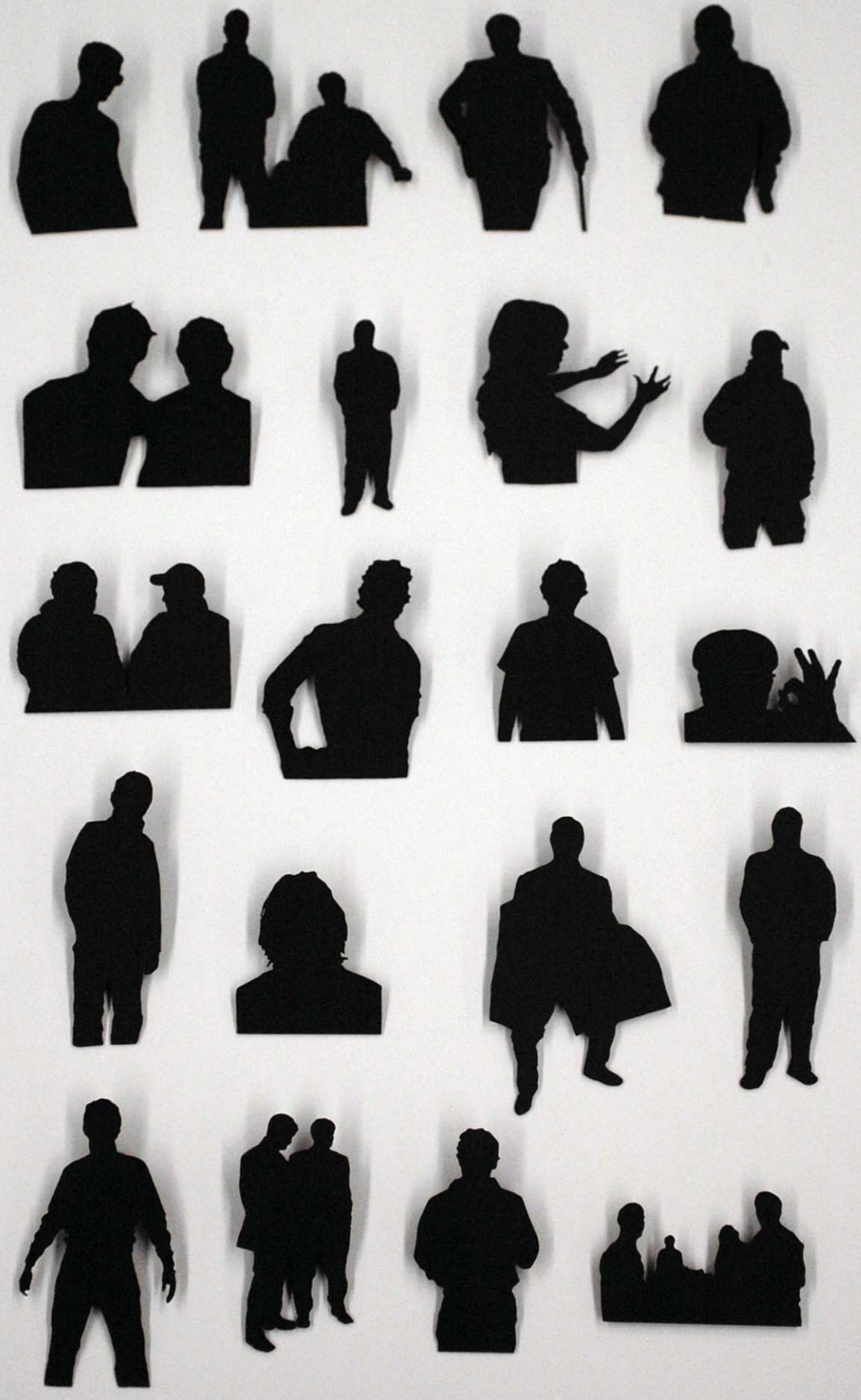
Graphic Content

Counterculture Imagery in Contemporary Jewelry

BY GABRIEL CRAIG

MICHAEL DALE BERNARD
Hoist, 2009
aluminum, stainless steel, sterling silver, vinyl, powder coat
5 x 4 x 1"
PHOTO: MICHAEL DALE BERNARD

ARTHUR HASH
"Silhouette" Series, 2005–present
steel, paint, pin stems
dimensions variable
PHOTO: ARTHUR HASH



IN OUR CURRENT media-literate culture, images are integral to the way we acquire and understand information about our world and surroundings. We are confronted daily with all manner of print media, digital images (on LCD and retina screens), and time-based media (digital video, film, and television).

Despite this image saturation and our increasing visual literacy, contemporary jewelry and metalwork, primarily a three-dimensional medium, seldom borrows strategies and formal language from graphic art forms such as comics, graffiti, and photography—due largely to the difficulty in translating two-dimensional imagery into metal. Metal is a resilient material, limited in its susceptibility to chromatic mark-making. Contemporary metalworking paradigms uphold process and material experimentation, a working methodology that is arrived at honestly, a natural outgrowth of allowing the metal (or often other materials) to participate in the creative dialogue.

Producing images in metal requires a certain disposition, a persistence that borders on stubbornness. To render precise images in metal, as do the artists presented here, the graphic form must first be created by another means–often digital—then later realized in metal through specific and exacting techniques.

If the initial image requires production in another two-dimensional medium, the logical question becomes, why make the extra effort to fix the image in metal? For Arthur Hash, Michael Dale Bernard, Loring Taoka, Marissa Saneholtz, and Andrew Kuebeck, the reason is undoubtedly a dual commitment to expressing identity and personal experiences while maintaining a love of craft process. But even more rare than the simple use of transparent imagery is these artists' use of graphic forms in the service of cultural commentary and even counterculture proclamations. The reason to use flat imagery in a medium that does not lend itself readily to such treatment is to enhance potent and communicative image-based work. These artists embrace the jewelry (or metal) object, recognizing it as a delivery mechanism for their message, but they also hold it at some distance by making decisions that favor communication over composition, marketability, or even acceptance.

Arthur Hash began his "Silhouette" series of laser-cut steel brooches in 2005, using silhouettes of figures that are identifiably modern in their dress, posture, and manner. While the silhouette form dates back to the eighteenth century, Hash's antecedent is undoubtedly silversmith Christina Y. Smith, whose work in the late 1980s and 1990s repopularized the silhouette in contemporary metalwork. However, through his use of distinctly pop culture graphic forms, Hash has more in common with counterculture silhouette titan Kara Walker.

For a number of years Hash's popularity rested on his ability to create flat images that subverted our expectations of their subject while increasingly commenting on societal issues. Two of Hash's more successful series in this vein are his scattered *Guns* and the companion *Birds*. Made for the 2009 exhibition "Re/Thinking Design for Consumption," they are an overt commentary on the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But Hash's single most iconographic work is undoubtedly his pink chainsaw *(Chainsaw Brooch)*, which renders an inordinately masculine object androgynous by the simple application of paint. The pink chainsaw is profoundly palatable; it is seductive.

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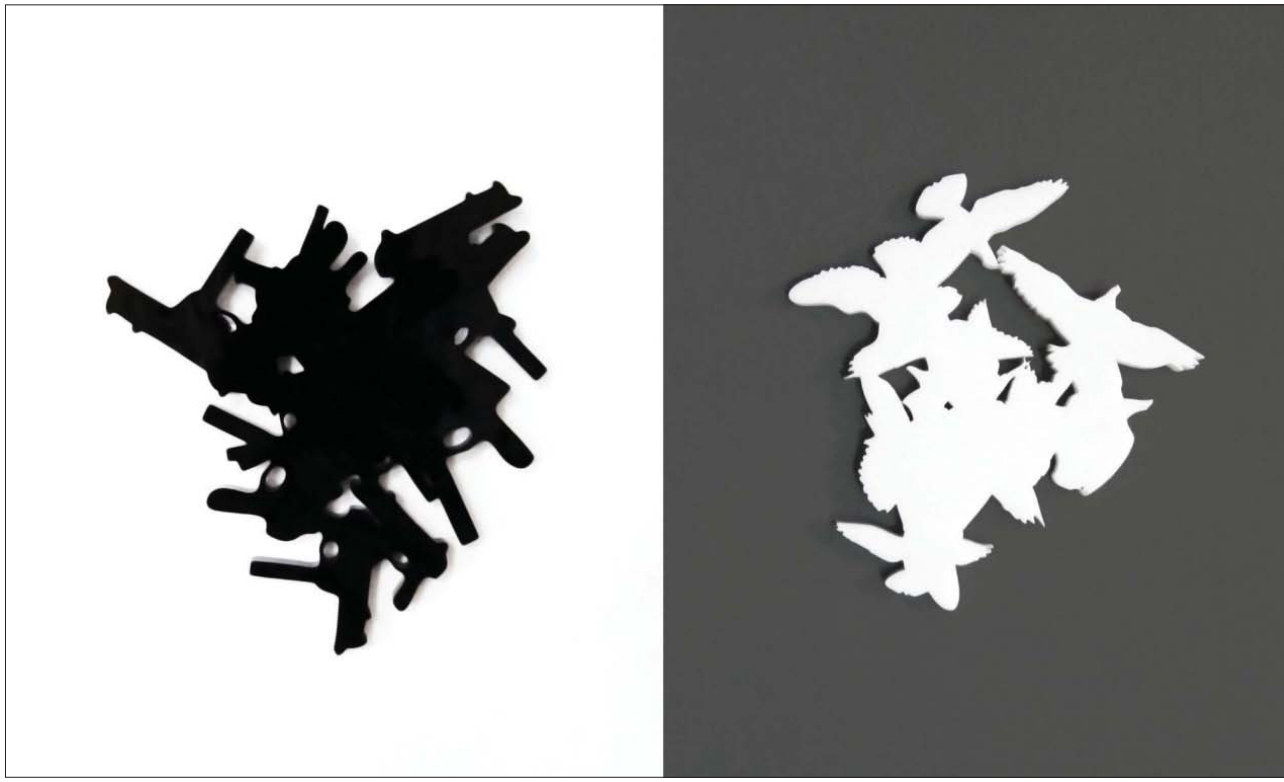
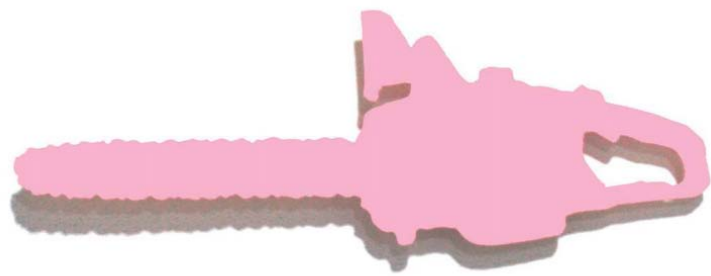
The work of Michael Dale Bernard, which emerged simultaneously with Hash's, offers a bridge between metals technic and pure street art style and ethos. Bernard, an unabashed product of Los Angeles, constructs images in metal using the same cutout, layering, and stencil techniques as street art superstars Banksy, Swoon, and Shepard Fairey. The

BANKSY
Kissing Coppers, 2005
spray paint on wall
BRIGHTON, UNITED KINGDOM



ARTHUR HASH
Guns and *Birds*, 2009
laser cut Plexiglas, brass
dimensions variable
PHOTO: ARTHUR HASH



ARTHUR HASH
Chainsaw Brooch, 2007
steel, paint, pin stem
dimensions variable
PHOTO: ARTHUR HASH

assumed sociopolitical context of much street art permeates Bernard's work. Bernard's notable 2009 "Ornate Perspectives" series combined images of industrial diesel machines and decorative damask patterns in two-point perspective, creating a stylistic contrast emblematic of the street art approach. Though impressive and intricate, in terms of content "Ornate Perspectives" is some of Bernard's tamest work.

As he releases several new series each year, trying to characterize Bernard is like trying to hit a moving target. In one piece from his 2009 "Urban LTD" series, Bernard merges a newsstand with a rabbit trap, while in another he amalgamates a nine-point trophy buck and a surveillance camera. "Urban LTD" rewards patient viewers who riddle out Bernard's collision of iconographic symbols, simultaneously humorous and critical.

Though Bernard works within a street art paradigm, he

MICHAEL DALE BERNARD
Buckeye, 2009
stainless steel, sterling silver, powder coat
2 x 2 x ¼"
PHOTO: MICHAEL DALE BERNARD

LORING TAOKA
(Untitled), 2010
brass, spray paint
4 x 8 x 4 ½"
PHOTO: LORING TAOKA

flaunts a deep commitment to craft. Each piece features several intricately cut layers of metal sheet, finicky cold connections sometimes numbering into the hundreds, and an absolute obsession with surface. While at first the link between the heirloom permanence of craft and the transience of street art may seem incompatible, Bernard cites the obsessively hand-cut wheat paste posters of Swoon as commensurate with the highest standards of craftsmanship. Bernard's exhibition venues may be institutional, but his approach shares both dedication and visual strategies with street art.

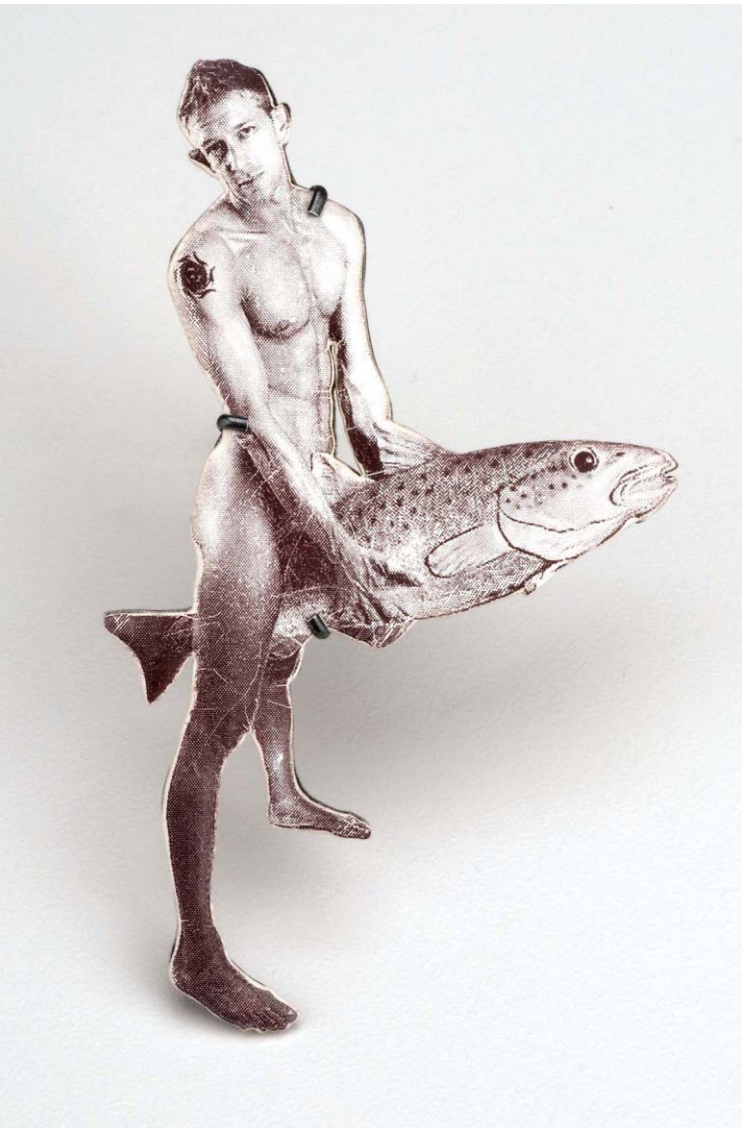
The most curious thing about the metalwork of Loring Taoka is how, despite its overtly racial and confrontational subject matter, it remains so palatable. Taoka blends the banal language of modern abstract geometric sculpture (situated in front of glass towers the world over) with loaded symbols of Japanese culture, which he deploys through simple positive and negative shapes and spray paint. Taoka, an Asian-American of mixed ancestry, confronts the stereotypes he encounters by forcing us to see the racial epithets and "othering" he encounters, further drawing attention to their ignorance and perversity. Taoka's "50/50" series is painted yellow and white because that is how he is viewed by society. He uses symbols like chopsticks, soy sauce bottles, and ikebana scissors to further flaunt the indignity.

Yes, Taoka's imagery is blunt, but that is exactly the point. This blatantly confrontational reclamation strategy—of a victimized person or group using the odious symbols of their oppression to desensitize, disarm, and critique the language of their oppressor—is not unique. A simplistic reclamation tactic is also the mode of lionized artists of color such as Carrie Mae Weems, who, like Taoka, appropriates the symbols and language of oppression in her placidly subversive images. Work that directly engages race has been a very long time coming to the homogeneous field of contemporary metalsmithing. And while some of the excitement and mystique of the artist evaporates in their directness, for Taoka it is clear the desire to communicate is more important than the art object.

Work that directly engages race has been a very long time coming to the homogeneous field of contemporary metalsmithing.

Marissa Saneholtz appropriates images from women's comic books of the 1950s and '60s, presenting a historical viewpoint yet to be challenged by the civil rights and feminist movements. The wholesale rejection of this type of sexist imagery by the feminist establishment over the past 40 years renders it a cultural orphan, detritus of a discarded gender stereotype. In the field of contemporary jewelry and metalwork that came of age concurrently with (and in many ways was defined by) feminist thought, gendered imagery and symbols are nothing new; one can't help but recognize a

LORING TAOKA
Sheer/Shear, 2010
brass, spray paint
6 x 2 x 4"
PHOTO: LORING TAOKA



ANDREW KUEBECK
I've Never Seen One Like That Before..., 2009
3 x 2 x ¼"
sterling silver, fine silver, enamel, toner decal
PHOTO: KEVIN MONTAGUE

ANDREW KUEBECK
A Boar and a Cad, 2009
sterling silver, fine silver, enamel, toner decal
3 x 1 ½ x ¼"
PHOTO: KEVIN MONTAGUE

bit of Kathleen Browne, Jessica Calderwood, or even Roy Lichtenstein in Saneholtz's work.

However, by deftly and lovingly rendering these images in the labor-intensive technique of champlevé enamel, Saneholtz reclaims the images as kitsch from the collective memory of women. Personally, Saneholtz acknowledges continued gender inequality, but also recognizes that today an empowered woman does not fit into one archetypal mold; a stay-at-home mom can be just as "liberated" as a working woman. Saneholtz's imagery and approach function almost seamlessly within inclusive, third-wave feminist doctrine, and pave the way for broader use of non-conforming gendered imagery within contemporary jewelry.

Like Saneholtz, Andrew Kuebeck appropriates his form language from the 1950s and '60s. In his 2009 "Figure Study" series he looks to alternative representations of men, specifically the hypermasculine and homoerotic imagery of male physique magazines. Occupying a precarious cultural position, publications such as *Champion* and *Athletic Model Guild* were produced implicitly as early gay pornography, but marketed as men's health and fitness

magazines to escape social censure. Their images are distinctly soft-core and tasteful, showing suggestive poses of scantily clad or nude men, not so dissimilar from today's *Maxim* or *Playboy* magazines.

Rather than directly appropriating historical images, Kuebeck generates his own beefcake imagery, hiring models and conducting photo shoots in his studio. Through careful direction, model selection, use of props, and sepia printing of enamel decals, Kuebeck is able to clearly articulate the earlier works' stylistic footprint. But rather than a mere voyeuristic homage to earlier homoerotica, Kuebeck creates his own images in order to confuse the model's chronological origin, giving us subtle visual cues such as distinguishably contemporary tattoos and posture. This anachronistic representation of the male nude, presented in a marginalized historic mode, becomes a critique of the continued taboo placed on the male body within our culture. An additional layer of gender politics is heaped atop the work by way of its realization as a brooch, a gendered format in itself. Just as with Hash's *Chainsaw Brooch*, Kuebeck's figures confuse gender associations. He advances the gay male body in contemporary jewelry beyond the inert shock tactics of Keith Lewis by presenting a dynamic confluence of history, sexuality, and craftsmanship in the tradition of photographers Horst, Mapplethorpe, and Ritts.

These counterculture image-makers embrace a progressive and cerebral conception of craft that speaks of the moment.

Though these artists share much in common, including friendship and collaboration, it seems unfair to say that their activities constitute anything more than simply the studio practice of five contemporary metal artists. There is no underlying trend other than that image making is a potent means of communication, which enables jewelry to participate in cultural commentary and counterculture proclamations. There is a certain amount of sacrilege in denying the primacy of material and process in craft, but to look deeper: craft's marginal status, both as a means of manufacturing and as an art form, awards it the mantle of a counterculture mode of production. While rendering arbitrary their materials and process, these counterculture image-makers embrace a progressive and cerebral conception of craft that speaks of the moment, of politics, of identity, of difference, and of gender. But perhaps most important is that the work speaks at all.

Gabriel Craig is a metalsmith, writer, and craft activist currently living in Detroit, Michigan.

Furthermore:
www.loringtaoka.com
www.andrewkuebeck.com
www.arthurhash.com
www.banksy.co.uk
www.carriemaeweems.net

MARISSA SANEHOLTZ
Trophy, 2009
copper, enamel, sterling silver, dollhouse tin
7 x 11 x ½"
PHOTO: TIM THAYER

MARISSA SANEHOLTZ
Trophy (detail), 2009

Post-Ethnic: Judaica Today

BY DANIEL BELASCO

NIMROD VARDI
Mine Is My Copy, 2009
aluminum, silver and gold plating
height: 2 ¾ to 4 ¾"

BUFFETED BY THE ONGOING standardization of good design (e.g., IKEA) and the current craze for DIY authenticity (e.g., Etsy), in recent years the larger craft community has recognized Judaica as an independent and vibrant area of creativity, attracting skilled artists and designers around the world, both Jewish and not. In this post-ethnic Judaica, ritual objects are opportunities for connection and discovery, not vehicles for particularism and exclusivity. Several talented artists are pushing the contemporary design interest in process to the extreme, testing the very notion of religious ritual as a renewable resource.

First, a definition: In brief, Judaica comprises the objects that play a significant role in the practice of Judaism and the establishment of Jewish forms of the sacred. Some types are specific to Judaism, such as the *yad* (Torah pointer), while other types are common to other cultures and religions, such as candlesticks and candelabra, goblets, plates, and amulets. Judaica are usually intended for either the synagogue, where rituals revolve around the Torah, the scroll with the five books of Moses, the core of the Old Testament; or for the home, the site of most other rituals relating to daily prayer, eating, holidays, meals, and lifecycle events. As the practice of Judaism continues to evolve, its ritual objects strive for wider relevance.

While Judaica are today created in nearly every medium, from glass to concrete to iPhone apps, metalworks occupy a significant place in the field, because of their traditional use, durability, malleability, and ability to be mass produced. The quality of metal Judaica today ranges from inexpensive bronze pieces cast in India to unique artworks crafted by leading international designers for public and private collections. Silver remains the essential material for handcrafted pieces, while steel prevails for high quality mass-produced objects. My research for the recent survey exhibition, "Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life," revealed that the field is divided significantly between artists who dedicate themselves to Judaica (and even make a living from it), but create less adventurous, more traditional works, and artists who create more experimental, innovative Judaica on occasion (for a commission, exhibition, or course) but do not make Judaica the center of their practice. The majority of works are created in the Jewish population centers of North America and Israel, but there is also small but significant production in Europe (especially England and the Netherlands) and Australia. This article surveys some of the most notable recent examples of international contemporary Judaica in metal, more specifically acquisitions by the few encyclopedic museums with dedicated Judaica collections and galleries; innovative work that has also achieved a degree of commercial success; and experimental works by emerging artists.

In this post-ethnic Judaica, ritual objects are opportunities for connection and discovery, not vehicles for particularism and exclusivity.

The Minneapolis Institute of Art and The North Carolina Museum of Art both house galleries dedicated to the display of Judaica in their permanent collections. Both tend to prefer significant and unique works by established artists in the field. California-based Harriete Estel Berman is

HARRIETE ESTEL BERMAN
Eons of Exodus (Seder plate), 2008
tin, steel, 10k gold, sterling silver, stainless steel, brass, pigments
4 ½ x 26 x 11"
COLLECTION OF MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART
PHOTO: PHILIP COHEN

known for her mixed-media jewelry and functional objects composed of found metal (tins, dollhouses, charity boxes), elaborately constructed with gold and silver pins and rivets. She makes vibrant feminist and socially conscious Judaica that is collected internationally. *Eons of Exodus*, created in 2008 and exhibited in the San Francisco Contemporary Jewish Museum's Seder plate invitational "New Works/ Old Story: 80 Artists at the Passover Table" in 2009 (and purchased by Minneapolis Institute of Art out of that show), exemplifies the multiple intersections of individual creativity and institutional support that go into the best of contemporary Judaica. The monumental piece is more of a plinth than a plate, composed of tin, steel, gold, silver, stainless steel, brass, and Plexiglas. It commemorates the story of the Exodus, a central part of the narrative of the Jews' movement from slavery to freedom, celebrated by the Seder during Passover holiday. With silhouette imagery derived from an old family Haggadah, Berman's plate depicts historical moments of Jewish and other communal upheaval. Her piece joins contemporary metalworks by Australian Marion Marshall and American Tony Berlant in the MIA's Judaica collection.

The North Carolina Museum of Art's collection was recently reinstalled in an expanded building. Established in 1974, it includes modern masterworks by Ludwig Wolpert and Moshe Zabari. In 2009, Wisconsin artist Fred Fenster was commissioned to make a new piece for the collection for the reopening because of his influence as an artist and educator, and his local ties, having taught at Penland School of Crafts Summer Workshop for many years. Stylistically, his pair of *Sabbath and Festival Candlesticks* is paradigmatic in its clean lines, balanced proportions, and technical finesse in blending contrasting geometries. The use of the six-pointed star as a Jewish symbol is also typical of his work. The star, despite its contentious history, retains its power as one of the most overt markers of Jewish purpose and identity in functional objects, second only to Hebrew words and letters.

In the U.K., there is a smaller yet vital contingent of contemporary Judaica metalsmiths. The Victoria & Albert Museum in London recently created a gallery dedicated to sacred silver and stained glass. In 2004, artist Tamar de Vries Winter was commissioned to create a Kiddush cup for the permanent collection. Digitally engraved and enameled with gold foil, the cup is part of her shift to technology to achieve greater precision and complexity in enamelwork. The Hebrew letters repeat the blessing over the wine, a moment of sanctification that begins Shabbat and holidays. The Israeli-born Winter is one of a number of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design alumni who have settled in London and contributed to the creation of contemporary Judaica and design, including the emerging silversmith Adi Toch. The V&A gallery also displays a contemporary silver mezuzah on loan from Londoner Mila Tanya Griebel, though most of the Jewish work in this case is by traditionalist Gerald Benney.

FRED FENSTER
Sabbath and Festival Candlesticks, 2009
silver
height 10 5/8"
COLLECTION OF NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART

SARI SRULOVITCH
Havdala spice and candle holders, 2000
sterling silver
4 x 1 1/8 x 3 3/8"

TAMAR DE VRIES WINTER
Kiddush Cup, 2005
sterling silver, enamel, gold foil
3 ½ x 2 ¾"
COLLECTION OF VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON, M.19-2005
PHOTO: MARY BERNARD

Many women artists have been attracted to the field since the 1980s, and thus more aspects of women's lives are being expressed in ritual objects.

Bezalel, established in Jerusalem in 1906 by European immigrants, is the one art school in the world where Judaica creation is consistently promoted through coursework, criticism, exhibitions, and prizes. Bezalel-trained Sari Srulovitch works in her studio on Jerusalem's Hutzot Hayotzer (Arts and Crafts Lane), across the way from her mentor, the witty modernist Zelig Segal. Srulovitch prefers subtlety over statement, injecting humanism and warmth into the rigid minimal forms that predominate much of contemporary high-end Israeli Judaica. She is also one of the few Sephardic Jews to embed Mediterranean heritage in Judaica; witness her spice containers, used during the Havdalah ceremony at the end of the Sabbath, a bittersweet return to the secular week marked with the smelling of spices. While the Ashkenazic (Central and Eastern European) tradition uses dried spices, a number of Srulovitch's spice containers are designed to hold fresh herbs, in the Sephardic tradition.

In his final project for Bezalel, London-based artist and curator Nimrod Vardi took a conventional mass-produced *kiddush* (ceremonial) cup and subjected it to a series of manipulations in the re-casting process to create a group of new aluminum cups. Exploiting various manufacturing defects resulting from molds, wax, casts, and silver and gold plating, the results are a distorted yet oddly attractive collection, resembling both an unearthed hoard and Picassoesque sculptures. Vardi asserts the primacy of creativity in contemporary religion by reversing the notion that a ritual object is subordinated to ritual performance.

Israeli Talila Abraham is the rare artist who combines innovative design, commercial impulses, and commitment to Judaica. A graduate of the Holon Institute of Technology, where she currently teaches, she developed a technique of etching intricate patterns into thin sheets of stainless steel so that they resemble lace. The "metal lace" material she creates can become baskets used to hold ritual foods like challah or matzoh, or can be paired with other materials like glass or cast steel to become vessels for honey or mezuzah cases. The translation of lace, a common decorative element in nondescript Israeli concrete apartments and houses, into sturdy and lustrous functional objects comes off brilliantly. Her products, under the brand Metalace Art, are widely available internationally.

Numerous forms of Judaica play an important role in daily life, and are handed down from generation to generation. Many women artists have been attracted to the field since the 1980s, and thus more aspects of women's lives are being expressed in ritual objects. The Women's Torah Project in Seattle, the first Torah entirely written and adorned by women, first read publicly in 2010, is among the most ambitious recent American synagogue

TALILA ABRAHAM
Royal Touch Basket I, 2009
stainless steel
9 x 8 x 4"
COURTESY OF METALACE ART

AIMEE GOLANT
Rimonim, 2009
copper, silver, 22k gold, brown diamond
3 x 10 x 11" each
COURTESY WOMEN'S TORAH PROJECT

RORY HOOPER
Sliced (Sliced Rail Track Candle Holder), 2010
steel, gold plated silver
6 ¼ x 5 ⅜ x 2 ⅜"

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
Rosh Hashanah (Torah pointer), 2010
sterling silver, 18k gold, citrine, honeycomb, bee, glass
6 ½ x ⅜ x ⅝"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE

BRIAN WEISSMAN
Word (Torah pointer), 2009
silver
13 x 2 x 2"
COLLECTION OF THE
JEWISH MUSEUM, NEW YORK

DROR BENSHETRIT
Connection Mezuzah, 2010
stainless steel
4 ¼ x 1 ½"
COURTESY ALESSI

commissions. California-based metalsmith Aimee Golant contributed *rimonim,* or finials, for the pair of wood staves. Golant, who has created mezuzahs for two Space Shuttle missions, and for the new National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, turned an object typically associated with fruit (*rimonim* means pomegranate in Hebrew) or royalty (a crown is another common type) into two-dimensional decorative flourishes. She likens the pair to open doors, and they are reminiscent of the baroque ornament flanking the facades of Jesuit churches in Rome. The use of copper, an unusual choice for contemporary Judaica, lends the pieces a warm humility.

While the older generation of modernists and postmodernists, such as Fenster and Berman, gravitate to the most familiar and central symbols and forms in Jewish ritual (yes, even Jewish feminism has its canon), younger artists prefer lesser known types of Judaica, narratives, and symbols. They share a need to reinvent the traditions, but from a position of personal discovery and formal irony. In a notable evolution, their approaches to Jewish ritual objects are more closely related to jewelry than hollowware, drawing on new ideas about the social construction of the body and the relationship between objects and identity.

The urge today is to blend and morph specifically Jewish symbols and rituals with pop culture, science, food, fashion, architecture, and commercial imagery and materials.

Israeli Rory Hooper's ideas about multifunctionality and displacement are emblematic of the current desire to look askance at Judaism and its big twentieth-century themes: Zionism, Modernism, and the Holocaust. Hooper's *Sliced Rail Track Candle Holder* consists of an actual iron train track bought in a scrap yard. The 30mm cross-section closely resembles the profile of a traditional candlestick. A jeweler trained at the Royal College of Arts in London, he refined the found material by finishing it with an asymmetrical silver cap to hold a candle. Hooper's work suggests the connections between memory and the nomadic and migratory patterns of Jewish and other communities, reminding us that railways can be sacred, such as the Ottoman Hijaz Railroad that once linked Palestine to Medina.

JOSH OWEN
Menorah, 2010
cast iron
11 x 11 x 3 ½"
COURTESY AREAWARE

Idaho-based Anika Smulovitz created a Rosh Hashana *yad* in 2010, equipped with an actual bee at the base, as part of new body of work displayed at Boise State University, where she teaches. This piece notably adapts the artist's well-known herbarium jewelry of bits of nature—flowers, insects—encased in glass on rings, connecting the body to nature. On Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, celebrants traditionally eat apples and honey as a wish for the New Year to be sweet. Smulovitz's *yad* provides a sacred connection between a folk tradition and the reading of the Torah. The doubling of rituals here indicates the interest in hybridity, emblematic of new Judaica, seamlessly achieved with artful, nearly clinical, craftsmanship. Smulovitz is one of a number of American metalsmiths who have discovered Judaica in their studies in prestigious metals programs at American universities. Smulovitz gained inspiration from Fenster and Lisa Gralnick at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

New York–based Brian Weissman trained at SUNY New Paltz with Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, and worked with Judaica modernist Kurt Matzdorf to complete one of the elder artist's final synagogue commissions, including a *ner tamid* (eternal light). Weissman has combined these influences into what he calls "alternative Judaica," which honors traditional forms of the object with contemporary interpretations. His *yad*, *Word* (2009), features the basic form of an Eastern European Torah pointer. But in place of one hand making a pointing gesture, there are four hands spelling "word" in sign language, which for the artist also connects to hip-hop culture (the slang "word" is a term of agreement, akin to "amen"), as well as riffing on the function of the pointer itself, in serving the chanting of the word of the Torah. *Word* uses wit to marry traditional forms and contemporary popular culture, imagining what blinged-out Judaica looks like for a generation of observant Jews who grew up immersed in hip hop in the 1980s and '90s.

Overall, the field of contemporary Judaica is dynamic and growing. Some of the leading manufacturers of design have recently launched their first Judaica products. Areaware's cast wrought iron menorah, designed by New York–based industrial designer Josh Owen, speaks of permanence and solidity, while its gentle curves and thoughtful incorporated base make it exceedingly user-friendly. Alessi, in collaboration with The Jewish Museum in New York, produced its first-ever religious object, a mezuzah, designed by Israeli-born, Dutch-trained, and New York-based Dror Benshetrit. The cast stainless steel *Connection Mezuzah* melds the ancient look of Jerusalem stone with a sleek contemporary aesthetic. Its solid rectangular base fits firmly within twentieth-century minimalism, while its raised stonelike surface, inspired by an ancient stamp seal, offers a metaphorical gesture to the continuity of Jewish identity from its birth to the present. *Connection Mezuzah* also marks the first collaboration between Alessi and an American museum, a signal moment in contemporary Judaica.

The cutting-edge work by artists born in the 1970s combines the best of postmodernism (diversity and history) and modernism (clarity and significant form). They are sophisticated works that simultaneously enhance and question ritual. Judaica has almost always expressed its hybrid style as sourced in local culture and Jewish traditions. The urge today is to blend and morph specifically Jewish symbols and rituals with pop culture, science, food, fashion, architecture, and commercial imagery and materials. Contemporary artists have seized upon the inherent diversity and pluralism of Jewish culture, using formal wit to negotiate differences. Perhaps the best means of expressing a post-ethnic Jewish identity in ritual objects is to pinpoint intercultural and open-ended qualities with new forms and materials.

Daniel Belasco, Henry J. Leir Associate Curator of The Jewish Museum, New York, curated the exhibition "Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life" (2009) and served as the juror for 500 Judaica: Innovative Contemporary Ritual Art *(Lark Books, 2010).*

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Reviews

Barbara Mann: Form and Response

Malone Gallery, Troy University, Troy, Alabama
October 28–November 18, 2010

by Dorothy Joiner

Though jewelry has sometimes been assessed as craft rather than as "fine art," Barbara Mann's works argue the contrary. They are sculptures in miniature, incorporating not only witty plays of form but also wide-ranging allusions to science, faith, and tradition, often evoking aesthetic meditations on life and death. "Form and Response," her recent exhibition, displayed a wide range of the artist's rings, brooches, pendants, necklaces, spoons, and liqueur cups, all expertly crafted, for the most part in gold and silver.

Reflecting Mann's interest in science, as well as a more personal association, *Creation Stem Cells Brooch* (2010) imitates a circular petri dish incubating stem cells, their branchlike extensions stretching toward each other in the miracle of growth. Wit an aesthetic alchemy, Mann transmutes these configurations into Michelangelo's celebrated Creation of Adam scene from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, in which God reaches toward Adam, infusing his languid figure with vitality. Three rubies set in gold indicate health, and twinned diamonds convey energy. Irregular perforations of the surface offer depth at the same time that they adumbrate deterioration, the inverse of growth. Mann's interest in these nerve-growing stem cells no doubt derives from her son's struggle with ALS, a fatal neurodegenerative disease.

Research Mice as Saints (2010), a necklace also inspired by medical research, punctuates a string of reiterated brass washers with three silver mouse skulls, each crowned with a tiny halo, earned by sacrificing their lives to research. Inscribed on each washer, the designation SOD1 indicates the enzyme now considered a possible cause of some forms of ALS.

Other works allude to life after death. A spiral of forged silver wire wraps around the white coral stem of *Swing Low Sweet Chariot Liqueur Cup* (2010). Undulations on the diminutive chalice indicate clouds, and the gold that fills a ragged crack near the lip symbolizes a burst of sunlight. An irregular pearl projecting from the stem suggests the "pearly gates" of heaven, and a diminutive sphere of gold on the spiral refers to the Biblical passage on which the hymn from the cup's title is based, in which wheels of the fiery chariot descended in a whirlwind, taking up the prophet Ezekiel (2 Kings 2:11). On the underside of the base, a circle of lapis lazuli, whose hue simulates that of the heavens, is an emblem joining earth to sky. Mann's cup brings to mind philosopher Jean Chevalier's understanding of the chalice as "a vessel holding the draught of immortality."

Creation Stem Cells Brooch, 2010
sterling silver, rubies, diamonds
diameter 2 ¼"
PHOTO: WALKER MONTGOMERY

Swing Low Sweet Chariot Liqueur Cup, 2010
sterling silver, 18k and 14k gold, pearl, lapis lazuli
4 x 2 ¼ x 2"
PHOTO: WALKER MONTGOMERY

Echoing this theme, *The Everlasting Life Bracelet* (2004) relies on a motif from the famous mosaic in Ravenna's Galla Placidia mausoleum: paired doves representing souls drinking from a fountain, as from the waters of life. Mann layers her stylized birds in polished silver over a textured base, somewhat like a palimpsest. Black diamonds create their eyes, and, set between them, white diamonds and blue aquamarines refer to the pure spiritual waters they imbibe.

The artist is also inspired by Europe's natural beauty. In her lighthearted *Mediterranean Brooch* (2002), wavy patterns on the graceful ellipse cast from a cuttlebone replicate the surface of the sea. This shape also suggests a boat whose gold railing is punctuated by freshwater pearls. Cabochons, one yellow glass for the sun, the other turquoise for the sea, indicate the intense colors of the region. A cast silver scorpion in the center stands for the continuity of life from prehistory to the present, and the diamond between its claws indicates both the resplendent light and a captured treasure.

Mann's artful jewelry, rich in allusions to art, science, and the charms of nature, certainly provides handsome adornment. But at the same time, her bantam sculptures offer much more, inspiring the viewer to ruminate on the great imponderables of nature, life, and death and on their intersection with modern science.

Dorothy Joiner is a professor of art history at LaGrange College, Georgia.

Susan Myers: Sleight of Hand

Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington
September 7, 2010–January 9, 2011

by Christine Tate

Susan Myers gives viewers fair warning that there will be more than meets the eye to her exhibition of three groups of metal sculpture, "Sleight of Hand." The title seems straightforward at first, but, like Myers's sculpture, it indeed leaves us wondering what meanings were intended and what were the magician's distractions.

"Sleight" can mean "manual dexterity," "cunning," "craft used in deceiving," "legerdemain," "artifice," or "stratagem." All apply here. Its homonym, "slight," either means "small" or refers to an act of contempt. Granted, the sculptures are diminutive, but one must wonder who is slighting whom—or what. Even "hand" is ambiguous. These sculptures are all made of industrially manufactured material and their execution is so precise they appear to have been made by machine.

"Memories of Happiness," the first of the three groups, is a series of stacked packages, gift boxes of varying sizes, cantilevered into tempting towers, tied together with ribbons, and topped with elaborate bows—all made of aluminum flashing. Beautifully wrapped presents are always inviting, but one may not touch in a museum, and while the ribbons draw one in, their sharp edges would give one pause. The title might be taken literally: most of us have received gifts that delighted us, but we know Myers's boxes are empty and of course they are not ours. And as one well knows, the wanting is more gratifying than the having. We feel the greatest happiness in the anticipation of opening a gift and an inevitable disappointment afterward. The paper, ribbons, and bows represented here, like those that seductively decorate and conceal the most coveted treasures, are discarded immediately after we destroy them. Then, of course, when the happiness of anticipation is just a memory, the emptiness we had hoped to fill with the gifts is often larger than ever.

The second group consists of three sculptures suspended in front of a windowless wall. At first, they seem to be ephemeral decorations, paper party poppers writ large in aluminum, but their titles refer to the magician's guile—and to our complicity in being hoodwinked. *For Your Entertainment*, *The Flourish*, and *The Switch*, like *Memories of Happiness*, lure us in only to put us in our place. They are shiny, almost sparkly, and beautiful, but sharp and a little dangerous. Swaying almost imperceptibly, they seem to have the potential to ensnare a viewer who ventures too close, and oblige us to ask ourselves why we are so often attracted to what we cannot—and should not—have, and why we long to be deceived and to deceive ourselves.

The third and most compelling group is from Myers's "Disposables" series. Like gift-wrap and party poppers, the objects represented in this series (plastic food containers, "paper" cups, and "Chinese" restaurant take-out boxes) are intended for a single use. On display are five take-out boxes made of twentieth-century silver-plated trays. Exquisitely unfolded—or not yet fully folded—they have the kind of pitiable, ironical names familiar to anyone who has ordered "Chinese" food in a strip mall: *Golden Pagoda, Spring Garden, Lucky Dragon*. Made of what were probably once wedding gifts, objects that a generation ago denoted the comfort, status, and stability of bourgeois domesticity, they force us to contemplate the artificiality and shallowness of American life. We discard everything, even the things that symbolize permanence, and make many things for the express purpose of discarding them. Not surprisingly, this leaves us little to show for our hurried, harried lives—eating and drinking on the run out of disposable vessels—but mountains of trash. Mercifully, Myers takes a little bit of our refuse and turns it into art.

Christine Tate teaches art history at the Delaware College of Art and Design, where she serves as head of academic studies.

SUSAN MYERS
Memories of Happiness, Magenta, 2009
aluminum
10 x 15 x 15"

SUSAN MYERS
For Your Entertainment, 2010
aluminum
58 x 24 x 24"

Bettina Speckner: A Rose is a Rose is a Rose

Sienna Gallery, Lenox, Massachusetts
October 15–November 14, 2010

by Andrea DiNoto

With this exhibition, the German artist Bettina Speckner continues to explore the photograph as a medium for jewelry, and as an art form in itself. Her designs, which incorporate both vintage (ferrotypes) and contemporary images (by

Os Argonautas 2010 (part of a set)
photo in enamel, silver, amethyst
pendant pieces: 4 ¼ x 5"

Speckner), clearly invoke her antecedents in Victorian-era commemorative and mourning jewelry. But they also demonstrate Speckner's skill in conjuring conceptual flights of fancy fraught with nostalgia and poetic allusions. Speckner for the first time pairs each of the jewelry pieces with a literary reference that suggests a possible interpretation beyond simple representation: a person; a scene; a flower. For Speckner, these texts serve to add "another layer, transparent yet substantive."

Some of the texts are simply one-word or one-line titles drawn from literature (*a rose is a rose is a rose*, Gertrude Stein's modernist line, titles a cartouche-shaped brooch in which a photo etching of roses on zinc is overlaid with red, gold, and black diamonds); but several pieces are matched with entire poems (e.g. Yeats's "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven"). Others carry fairy-tale names (*Cinderella*, *Scheherazade*, *Alice in Wonderland*), and in two instances song lyrics (all the words to the "Barbara Song" from *The Threepenny Opera,* and to a plaintive Portuguese ballad, "Os Argonautas"). In a brooch-and-earring set titled *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Speckner uses her own moody, black-and-white photo of a forest for the brooch, in a double-oval composition ringed with long crystal drops that suggest rain or tears. The earrings are constructed from what appear to be fragments of antique images of women's quizzically smiling faces, each hung with two long crystals. In keeping with Shakespeare's title, the impression is dreamlike, and darkly romantic. By contrast, the brooch that accompanies the Yeats poem presents an ambiguous, even troubling, ferrotype image of a calm young Victorian woman whose face and modestly dressed body has been literally riddled with diamond beads that might as well be buckshot.

Night is Like a Quiet Sea
(brooch), 2010
ferrotype, silver,
Baroque pearls, garnet
3 ½ x 2 ⅜"

Speckner's artist statement asserts: "I do not work with the intention to decorate things or to make them look prettier. I search to discover the soul of an object or the essence of a photograph and to shape something new which appeals to me and to other people far beyond the optical appearance." Agreed, but it risks being read as a defacement of the subject. Does Speckner mean to suggest an emanation of beauty from the subject's soul; or is she staging the persistence of memory as the ferrotype rusts and deteriorates? To a ferrotype of a behatted young man, paired with the 1834 poem by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, *Night is Like a Quiet Sea*—as if to illustrate the line "Desires are like clouds that sail through the quiet space"—Speckner has affixed two fluffy, cloudlike baroque pearls, which appear as surreal efflorescences. But might the pearls also represent the world of beauty and luxury that will ever elude the working-class subject?

In her seminal essay, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag wrote: "Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art.... Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy." In Speckner's effort to forge "the sublime and the profane into a new poetic harmony," she more than fulfills Sontag's words. The few non-photographic pieces in this show, exquisite brooches and earrings formed from intersecting jewel-encrusted metal arcs, are alluring as well: they are jewelry, pure and simple.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on art and design.

Think Again: New Latin American Jewelry

The Museum of Arts and Design, New York City
October 12, 2010–February 27, 2011

by Barbara Smith

The largest and most comprehensive exhibition of contemporary Latin American jewelry ever shown in the United States, "Think Again: New Latin American Jewelry" was organized by the Otro Diseño Foundation for Cultural Cooperation and Development and curated by Valeria Vallarta Siemelink, a Mexican-born, Netherlands-based architect and historian. Thematic in structure, the exhibition's main sentiment concerns diversity and innovation. The jewelry is classified into three categories: "History, Memory, and Tradition," "A Flair for Invention," and "Latin America as a Source for Inspiration." By focusing on the intersecting spheres of craft, design, and art, "Think Again" aims to participate in the international jewelry dialogue by emphasizing innovation. The framework of the exhibition further aims to position jewelry as a potent medium of cultural expression.

"Think Again" presents a diverse range of geographic iconography as articulated through the format of jewelry, not "jewelry-as-art." The artists explore history, tradition, colonialism, politics, migration, religion, and memory as they relate to their personal narratives. The repeated and poetic use of the reliquary highlights an attention to jewelry's ability to contain and transfer meaning through wear. Guigui Kohon's *10 Cities and 1 Interior* communicates portable memories and transience. Stella Bierrenbach's

ELENA BIERMANN ANGEL
Todd en Leben, 2007
sealed gelatin capsules

Souvenir de… illustrates the relationship between memory and place. A creative and overtly political series of brooches entitled "Hit the Road" by Helena Biermann Angel involves acts of obsessive collection. Pollution and other imperceptible particles are gathered on surfaces attached to her moving car. When they are brought to the body, grime and pollution become charged ornamentation.

Why are the reliquary, and a sense of constant travel, potent and popular subjects? An exhibition poised to expose an unfamiliar American audience to Latin American jewelry would be expected to offer a clear context for the work. Other questions go unanswered. What are the sociopolitical realities of the region? Why is there an emphasis of the cross-cultural exchange between European and Latin American jewelry marketplaces? When and why do material shifts occur?

"Think Again" is concerned with how we come to understand a permeable context. The overall structure of the exhibition asks the audience to contemplate how ideas are generated and how they adapt over time and across cultures. Within the exhibition's thematic configuration lies the potential for an ordered and meaningful viewing experience. Much of the work moves fluidly between themes, ultimately preventing a clear definition of context. The disjointed exhibition space at The Museum of Arts and Design serves to confuse the order in which important contextual information is consumed. The most prominently displayed work belongs to the category labeled "Latin America as a Source for Inspiration," and highlights the fusion of Latin American aesthetics and contemporary European jewelry conventions. The result is a style that is familiar, not fresh; not transcending ethnicity, but simply attempting to be exotic. Is this cross-cultural exchange?

The most compelling quality of "Think Again" is how it addresses the exchange between cultures: the process of ethnic fusion when two regions unite because of an interest in jewelry. How do we come to understand other people, cultures, or exotic situations? We have two obvious options: the virtual and the real. While it is easy to access far away places through the computer screen, jewelry is an inherently tactile medium. Because of its ties to the body, wearability is implicitly understood. Although "Think Again" does not clearly define how the collaboration between Latin America and Europe occurs—whether through physical or virtual interaction, or both—the exhibition does articulate that such collaboration generates evolution.

Ultimately, the exhibition is not about jewelry; it is about cultural exchange. This is supported by work that is provocative, beautiful, sentimental, and smart, although not avant-garde. Jewelers such as Laura Alvarado push rapid prototyping technology until the result transcends the process. Collaborative work by Walka Studio cleverly deals with the relationship between globalization and local identity. Such works enable "Think Again" to shatter the archetypes of Latin American jewelry. As viewers, we are not asked to discern how geographic location and culture influence the creation of jewelry, but rather how jewelers approach the continent through jewelry. Where "Think Again" has to be careful is that it doesn't simply become a manifestation of a tourist economy for a Western audience.

WALKA STUDIO
Mestizo, Just for a Few Coins, 2010
sterling silver, gold
length 37 ½"

Barbara Smith is an artist, writer, and adjunct professor at SUNY-*New Paltz.*

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BY DANA SINGER

Harmony pendant by Charlie Nhung Nguyen, winner in both the Hoover & Strong manufactured design and student categories; bracelet by Harry L. Caldwell IV, first place winner in the professional designer category.

Susie Ganch and Marjorie Simon, new members of Metalsmith's *Editorial Advisory Committee*

Winners of the HARMONY™ Jewelry Design Competition

The winners of the SNAG/Hoover & Strong HARMONY™ Jewelry Design Competition were selected on March 14 at a private jury session held during the MJSA New York Expo. The winning design is a Harmony pendant, made by Charlie Nhung Nguyen, a student at George Brown College in Toronto. This piece will be manufactured by Hoover & Strong and sold in retail stores across the country, with the proceeds going to The Nature Conservancy. Charlie Nhung Nguyen's piece was also named the first place winner in the student category. In the professional designer category, Harry L. Caldwell IV received the first place award for his bracelet design.

The august panel of judges were jewelry designer Amy Levine, AmyL Design; David Pillow, Vice President, Zale Corporation; and Noreen Paris, Senior Director of Design Development, David Yurman. The judging was coordinated by SNAG board members Marlene Richey and Nanz Aalund, and Hoover & Strong's National Sales Representative Larry Bock. All the final pieces were made using Hoover & Strong's HARMONY™ Recycled Silver.

***Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee Acquires New Members**

The Editorial Advisory Committee of *Metalsmith* welcomes its newest members: jeweler, writer, and educator Marjorie Simon and metalsmith and professor, Susie Ganch. This is Marjorie's third term as Chair of the Editorial Advisory Committee for *Metalsmith*, and she has contributed more than 50 articles for the magazine. She was the juror and writer for *500 Brooches* (Lark Books), and has exhibited and taught internationally, and has received two fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Susie Ganch is currently Assistant Professor and Head of the Metals Program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She is also co-director of Radical Jewelry Makeover, an international traveling community jewelry mining project. Her work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and she is the recipient of the Theresa Pollack Fine Art Award, a VA Commission for the Arts Grant, and multiple VCU Faculty Research Grants.

SNAG Launches Digital *Metalsmith*

SNAG has launched the digital version of *Metalsmith*. Every new issue will now be available in its entirety online. All SNAG members automatically receive both the print and digital versions. Read *Metalsmith* on your iPad, download the free app from the Apple iTunes App Store. Both print and digital subscriptions are available on SNAG's website, as are single digital copies through QMags.com.

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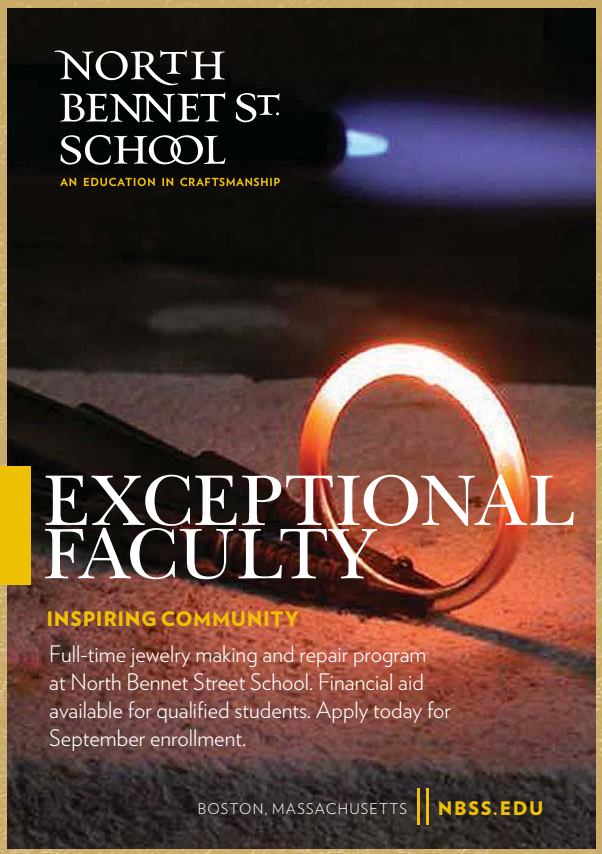

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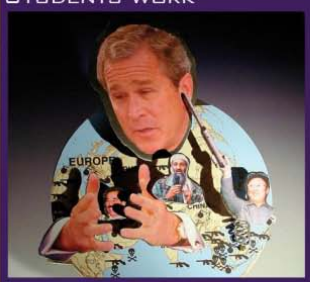

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Above: "Let's Party" by Betty Helen Longhi; photo by artist. Pendant; Sterling silver, niobium and pearls

Right: "Rivers and Canyons II" by Cynthia Eid. Sterling, 18KYG, and Rhodolite Garnets, 7" x 7" x 1" Neckpiece

A spiculum is a single piece of sheet metal that is formed into a tapering tube.

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Spiculums

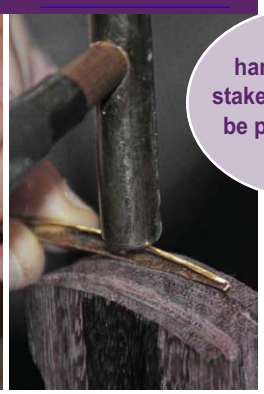
by Betty Helen Longhi, Cynthia Eid, and Andrea Kennington

The straight spiculum demonstrated below.

A spiculum is a tapering tube that is formed from a single piece of sheet metal. The name is derived from the Latin, spica, which means, "to spike," and a spicule is a small spike.

There are two types of spiculums commonly made by metalsmiths. The *straight spiculum*, a tapered tube with a straight axial line, was originally developed by Heikki Seppä. The metal is furrowed in a forming block with a progression of cross-peen hammers until the cross-section of the spiculum is a U. Then the U is closed from the outside until the edges meet and the seam is soldered to prevent the metal from buckling when the spiculum is bent. The resulting object is very rigid and strong. There are no limits to size — they can range from micro-spiculums to monumental sculptures.

Andrea Kennington and NC Black design micro tools specifically for making micro-spiculums and micro shell forms. For pdfs of how to work with these micro tools, visit www.NCBlack.com.

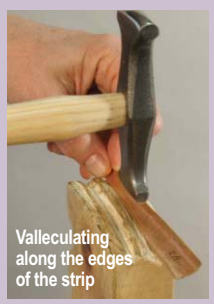


The hammers and stakes shown can be purchased at Allcraft.

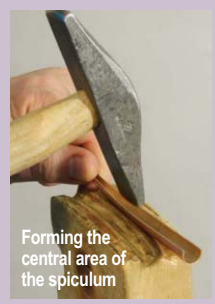
The second type of spiculum, known as an *open-seam spiculum*, is made by anticlasting a strip of metal to the desired curvature before closing it into a tube. Instead of making a tube and then bending it, this method performs both operations simultaneously. Primary development of the open-seam spiculum was done by goldsmith Michael Good. You can find Good's instructions in his article in *Metals Technic*, published by Brynmorgen Press.

The Process for Forming a Straight Spiculum

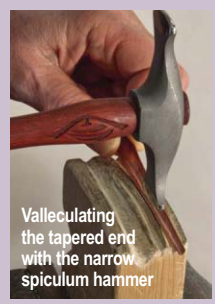
Valleculation is Heikki Seppä's name for the process of forming the spiculum blank from a flat sheet of metal to a deep U along its entire length. Using various cross peen hammers and a spiculum stake, the blank is hammered in a methodical series of courses, beginning at the edges of the metal and working towards the center-line. By selecting the size cross peen face that falls comfortably into each groove of the stake, a furrow is created and valleculation will result.



Valleculating along the edges of the strip

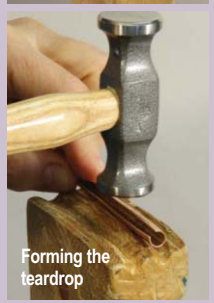


Forming the central area of the spiculum

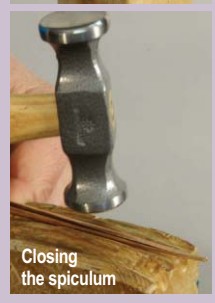


Valleculating the tapered end with the narrow spiculum hammer

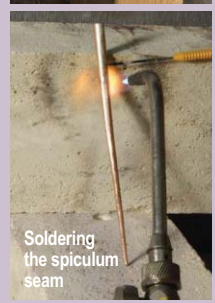
A more complete article about how to make straight spiculums can be downloaded from the artists' websites: fluidformsinmetal.com and cynthiaeid.com



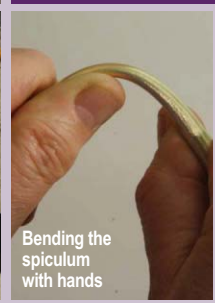
Forming the teardrop



Closing the spiculum



Soldering the spiculum seam



Bending the spiculum with hands

In order to close the form into a spiculum with a circular cross-section, the U must be taller than it is wide. Lay the furrowed blank on its side in a groove of the stake, so both open edges form a vertical plane, perpendicular to the stake. Gently hammer along the outer length of each side with a planishing hammer and the U will become taller.

Continue closing by rotating the blank in the groove so the plane between the two edges is at a 45 degree angle to the stake. Hammer gently along both edges until the cross-section of the form becomes an open tear drop.

Complete the closing by supporting the spiculum upright in a groove matching the size of the teardrop base, oriented so that you can look down the length of the spiculum seam. Tap the upper edges lightly with a planishing hammer so they come together. Work back and forth along both edges, so that the form closes evenly from both sides at the same time. Soldering the spiculum in a vertical position uses gravity to help the solder flow down the seam.

The best tool to bend the spiculum is your hands, since any mechanical devices tend to dent the surface. Support it between fingers and thumbs, pressing with the thumbs and pulling with the fingers. Due to mechanical constraints, tighter bends are more easily made at the narrower sections of the tube and there are limits as to how tightly the tube can be bent.

This article includes selected excerpts from *Shellforming Techniques for Jewelers and Metalsmiths*, a book currently in progress, written by Longhi and Eid, edited by Tim McCreight, and soon-to-be published by Brynmorgen Press.

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Allcraft....62, 63
Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts....60
Atelier Hg....6
Auto Trac, Inc....71
Billanti Casting Co., Inc....61
Buyers Market of American Craft....11
Charon Kransen....7
Chris's Cables....66
Colorado Metalsmithing Association....10
Conner Jewelers School....57
Creative Metalworks School of Design....58
Denise Betesh....1
Downeast Trading....72
Elise Bergeron....7
Ethical Metalsmiths....65
Gallery Loupe....9
Gem & Lapidary Wholesalers....64
George Sawyer....Cover
GIA....57
Gloria Askin....7
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Hauser & Miller....61
Idyllwild Arts....59
International Society of Glass Beadmakers....10
J Cotter Studio....7
Kendall College of Art and Design FSU....58
Larry Paul Casting....70
MagiAstra....9
Mendocino Art Center....59
Metalsmith....64, 66
Mference Co LLC....11
MJSA....68, 69
Mobilia Gallery....9
Myron Toback, Inc....64
Noble....67
North Bennet Street School....57
Ornamentum Gallery....3
Otto Frei....Cover
Ox-Bow....60
Patina Gallery....8
Penland Gallery....11
Penland School of Crafts....60
R.W. Manufacturing....65
Reactive Metals Studio....65
Rio Grande....Cover
Schlaifer's Enameling Supplies....61
Smithsonian Craft Show....10
SOFA NY....5
Studio Jewelers, Ltd....60
Thompson Enamel....70
Turtle Gallery....6
United Precious Metal Refining....71
University of Iowa....58
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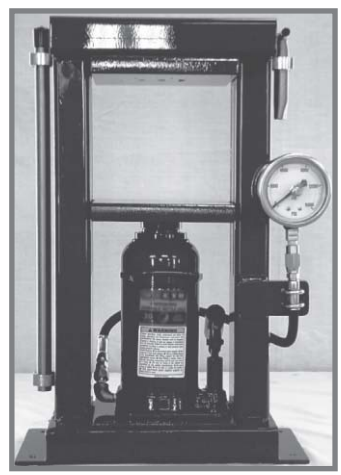

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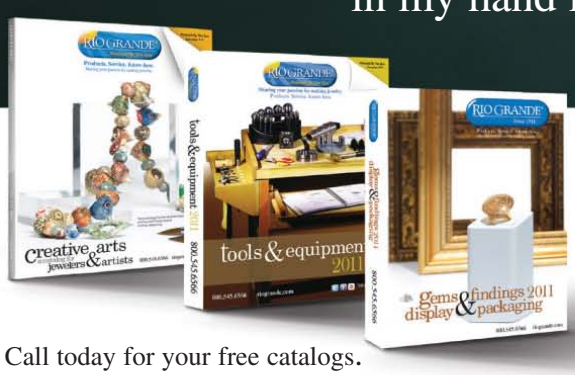

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